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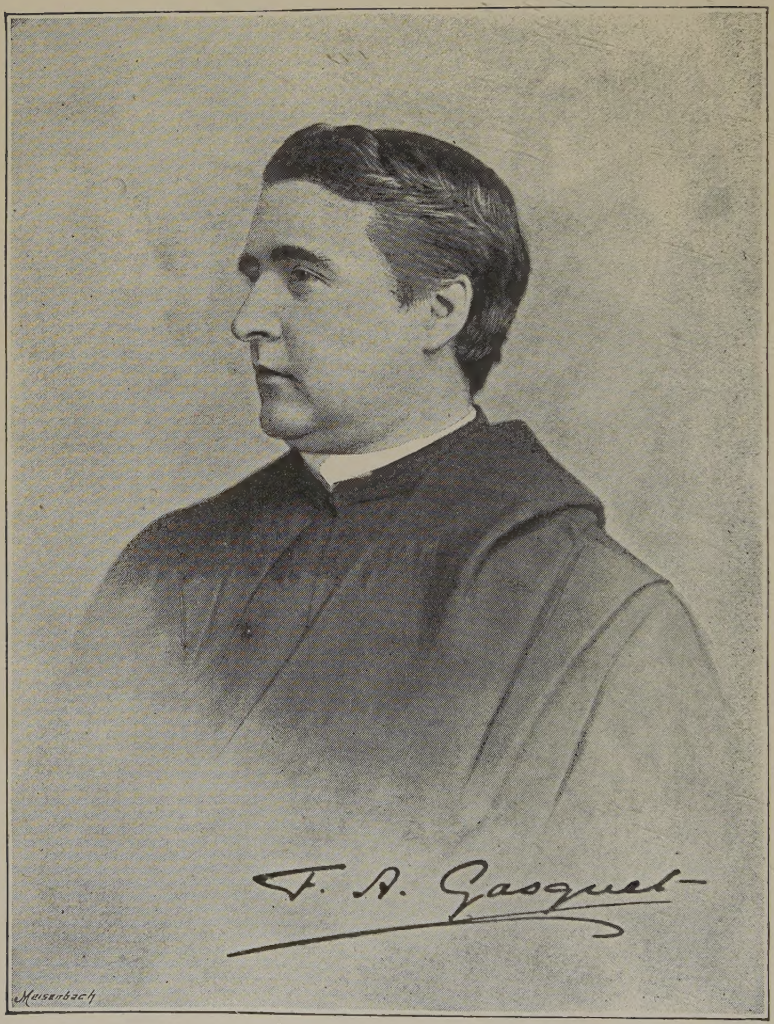
F. A. Gasquet
Meisenbach

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1906

HENRY VIII

AND

THE ENGLISH MONASTERIES

AN ATTEMPT TO ILLUSTRATE THE HISTORY OF THEIR SUPPRESSION

BY

FRANCIS AIDAN GASQUET D.D.

MONK OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

SOMETIME PRIOR OF ST. GREGORY'S MONASTERY DOWNSIDE BATH

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AT THE FEET

OF

HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII.

THIS VOLUME,

THE FIRST FRUIT OF WORK UNDERTAKEN

IN OBEDIENCE TO

HIS COMMAND,

IS,

AT THIS TIME OF HIS SACERDOTAL JUBILEE,

LAID,

AS A TESTIMONY OF FILIAL DEVOTION.

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TO THE READER.

Custom requires for a book some words of personal introduction. The present work has no pretence to be more than the title page claims for it, "an attempt to illustrate the history" of a great event in our national annals. My sympathies are naturally engaged, but I have striven to avoid anything like presenting or pleading a case, which, indeed, I felt would defeat my purpose. If I have insisted more on the facts which tell in favour of the monasteries than on those which tell against them, it is because the latter are well known and have been repeated, improved on and emphasized for three centuries and a half, whilst that there is anything to say on the other hand for the monks, has been little recognized even by those who would be naturally predisposed in their favour. My belief is, that the facts speak strongly enough for themselves, and I have endeavoured to add as little as possible of my own to the story they tell. All I desire is that my readers should judge from the letters, documents and opinions, which will be found in the following pages, whether bare justice has hitherto been done to the memory of the monastic order in England.

I have endeavoured as far as I possibly could to

write from a personal inspection of the documents of which I have made use. My searches have taken me to many places, and have brought me in contact with many people to whom I was previously a stranger. My thanks for help and encouragement are due to too many for me to name individually. But I cannot pass over in general terms the ready and generous manner in which the episcopal registers, without free use of which it would have been vain for me to write on the subject at all, have been opened to me. The place in which I write may excuse a particular reference in this matter to the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells. From the various Registrars I have received the same unvarying courtesy and kindness. From public officials attention to all demands is oftentimes regarded as a right. Both at the Record Office and the British Museum, though I trust I have never given trouble without need, my requests must, I feel, have seemed sometimes importunate and even unreasonable. Without the concurrence and ever-patient kindness which I met with at both institutions my labours must have been indefinitely prolonged. When I think of the dusty search-room at the Record Office it calls up above all the pleasant memory of the friendly help extended to me by so many of its practised habitués.

Downside Monastery,
October 26, 1887.

INTRODUCTION.

MONASTIC ENGLAND.

The ruined abbeys of England are evidences of a past which, however diversely it may be judged in other respects, all will agree was great. To some the crumbling wall or broken arch speaks eloquently of the rapacity of an English king and indicates the completeness of his spoliation. Others again are reminded of the reasons pretended by the spoiler. Alas! it is to be feared to most Englishmen the desecrated sanctuary calls up one thought above all else—the thought of wasted, wanton or vicious lives, and of the sad necessity which compelled king Henry to proceed to drastic measures of reform. A story often repeated proverbially gains in strength. For many generations anecdotes about the wickedness of monk and nun have been listened to and accepted as simple truth; and even well-wishers to the monastic institute have thought it best friendliness to observe or counsel silence.

Undoubtedly it is no inviting task to attack a tradition so long implanted. A wholesome horror of monk and monastery has been imparted with early knowledge at a mother's knee,—the teaching first imbibed and latest lost. It would almost seem that in this regard the national character of honesty and fairness had been permanently warped. Englishmen have been wont to extend consideration even to a fallen enemy. In this case, they appear to have had neither mercy

nor pity for those who were among the most honoured and cherished of their own household. The truth is, that Henry's scheme for lowering monks in the popular estimation, though it did not impose on a people who knew them by experience, has served its purpose with subsequent generations. "All that men of the stamp of John Bale," justly says a modern writer, "could do in the way of defiling the memory of cænobites in general has been done, and though Bale is a discredited man, he and others like him have completed a work which can now scarcely be undone, and the memory of those who indubitably preserved religion and increased learning in the land is almost hopelessly besmirched."*

That the state of religious life in England, as described in the letters and reports of Henry's chosen visitors, was bad, is true. But these reports even do not by any means bear out the popular impression. The real question, however, that needs consideration is the worth of the visitors' word. Edmund Burke speaks in accord with the dictates of mere common sense when he writes:—"I rather suspect that vices are feigned or exaggerated when profit is looked for in the punishment. An enemy is a bad witness, a robber is a worse."†

For three centuries the only voices raised in defence of the English monasteries have been those of antiquaries, who might be supposed to have a natural sympathy for a great, a romantic past. And even these, from Camden downwards, have found it well to make excuse for their weakness, and have not failed to add, however incongruously it might run with the context, the general sentence of condemnation. Burnet

* "Mon. Franciscana," ii. Pref., p. xxx.

† "Reflections on the French Revolution."

fixed, so far as history is concerned, what it had to say on the subject, and the "History of the Reformation" was deemed sufficient to dispense with all need for further inquiry. In the last resort the utterance of the words *Comperta* and *Black Book* was enough to warn the curious or the adventurous off dangerous ground. It is only of late years that the subject has come within the scope of ordinary historical investigation, and some earnest and truthful writers have paved the way for a juster estimate of the case. Among these, stands pre-eminent Canon Dixon, who justly claims—strange as the claim may seem in regard to a subject about which so much has been written—"to have laid before the student of history for the first time a connected and particular account of the suppression of the English monasteries." The present work is an attempt to carry the investigation yet a step further forward; and, utilizing the mass of scattered material "still unpublished and unconsulted," to treat the suppression not as an episode of a greater subject, but as an object of special inquiry.

That the monasteries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were all that could be desired in discipline and vigour would be maintained by no one who has studied the subject. The circumstances of the troubled times in many instances no doubt exerted an influence on the interior spirit of the cloister as it did on the Church at large. Before entering on the subject of this book, it will be well to sketch slightly a picture of the daily life practised in one of the "great and solemn monasteries," in which Henry, using the Parliament as his mouthpiece, thanks God "that religion is right well kept." It will be necessary also briefly to recall to the mind of the reader how the vast monastic system interwove itself in the social, political and ecclesiastical life of the kingdom.

However much monasteries might differ in details of arrangement, the fundamental principle of all was life by rule spent in the service of God. The first duty in the monastery was the regular service of prayer and praise. Besides this, however, in most monastic houses a considerable portion of the day was set apart for active duties. The cares of a great administration absorbed the energies of the elder members, whilst teaching, study and the cultivation of the arts and sciences occupied the attention of the entire community. As a rule, early rising, simple fare and constant work, done only with the hope of a higher reward in the world to come, was the lot of the monk. Whether such a life was profitable or not must depend upon opinion. But, if those who write and speak so easily of "lazy monks" would with candour try to realize as a fact the life thus led, they would at least acquit them of this charge.

Dean Church draws an admirable picture of a monastery in its outward aspect, at a period three or four centuries earlier than that now dealt with. "The governing thought of monastic life," he says, "was that it was a warfare, *militia*, and a monastery was a camp or barrack. There was continual drill and exercise, early hours, fixed times, appointed tasks, hard fare, stern punishments; watchfulness was to be incessant, obedience prompt and absolute; no man was to murmur. What seems to us trifling or vexatious must be judged of and allowed for by reference to the idea of the system; training as rigorous, concert as ready and complete, subordination as fixed, fulfilment of orders as unquestioning as in a regiment or ship's crew which is to do good service. Nothing was more easy to understand in those days in any man, next to his being a soldier, than his being a monk, it

was the same thing, the same sort of life, but with different objects. . For the objects in view, the organization given us by Lanfranc in the regulations drawn up for the English monasteries, was simple and reasonable. The buildings were constructed, the day was arranged, the staff of officers were appointed in reference to the three main purposes for which a monk professed to live—worship, improvement, and work.* There were three principal places which were the scenes of his daily life—the church, and in the church especially the choir, the chapter-house, and the cloister; and for each of these the work was carefully laid out. A monk's life at that period was eminently a social one, he lived night and day in public; and the cell seems to have been an occasional retreat, or reserved for the higher officers. The cloister was the place of business, instruction, reading, and conversation, the common study, workshop and parlour of all the inmates of the house—the professed brethren, the young men whom they were teaching or preparing for life, either as monks or in the world: the children who formed the school attached to the house, many of whom had been dedicated by their parents to this kind of service." †

It must be remembered that denunciations as to laxity of life, even when made about the monasteries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, rests, as a rule, on a comparison with primitive fervour. Whatever may be said as to the lives of the monks at this period, it must be confessed that the common and ordinary routine of their houses raised them

* How true this is may be seen by a glance at the plan of any of the old monasteries.

† "Life of St. Anselm," Chap. iii.

immeasurably above the level of life around them. The Episcopal visitations of religious houses prove conclusively that, whatever failings or even graver delinquencies required censure and correction in the case of individuals, the method of life for the community remained the same, and that in no sense could it with truth be called a life of ease and sloth. The very divisions of the day, which were practically the same in most religious houses, are evidences of the real character of monastic observance continued down to the very eve of their destruction. The night office, now known as "Matins," began not later than two in the morning. In many monasteries, and when the length of the office or additional solemnity required, it commenced at midnight. Two hours were occupied in the solemn chaunting and singing of this, the first of the daily services. "The monks," says a writer who remembered the Benedictines of Durham before the dissolution, "when they were at their matins and service at midnight, then one of the said monks did play on the organs themselves and no other."* The matins and the *Matutinæ laudes* (now Lauds) formed practically one service occupying the entire two hours. The

* "Rites of Durham," Surtees Soc., p. 54. This document stands alone as a connected account of life in a great monastic community at the very moment of its destruction. It ill accords with the later popular traditions. Some people may be inclined to view it as a picture drawn by a *laudator temporis acti*. It is certainly the work of a man who had personal information, and had actually seen what he describes. To those who know the monastic life in practice, the innumerable touches of detail afford convincing evidence of the truth of the description. It presents a picture of regularity, gravity, discipline and order such as any regular house might well aspire to. That the monastery was in an excellent state of discipline may be judged from a letter of the visitor Layton, written the 26th January, 1536 (Calendar x., No. 183). "Your injunctions," he says, "can have no effect in Durham Abbey in some things; for there was never yet woman in the abbey further than the church, nor they (the monks) never come within the town."

labour* of this night service was followed by a brief period of rest, till at five the community again assembled in the choir for the office of Prime, which was followed by the daily Chapter. There faults were corrected, encouragement given, the labours of the community apportioned, and, when occasion required, matters of common interest discussed and arranged. At the stroke of six the short Chapter mass was sung, and after this study or exercise occupied the monks till eight o'clock.

At that time once more the stroke of the bell called them to choir and the High mass, to which the time till ten was allotted. Then came the meal of the day, except on fast days when it was some hours later. In the refectory strict order was preserved, and the superior or his chief officer presided. The monks waited in turns upon each other, and during the meal the sacred Scriptures were read. "Also in the east-end of the frater," we are told of Durham, "stood a fair table with a decent screen of wainscot over it . . . for the master of the novices and the novices to dine and sup in. At which time the master observed this wholesome and goodly order for the constant instruction of their youth in virtue and learning. That is, one of the novices at the election and appointment of the master did read some part of the Old and New Testament in Latin in the dinner time, having a convenient place at the south end of the high table within a fair glass window invironed with iron. And certain steps of stone and iron rails on the one side went up to it, and supported an iron desk there placed, upon which lay the

* The word *labour* is used advisedly. Those only who have had practical experience of choral recitation can appreciate the call on the physical powers which it demands.

Holy Bible, where one of the novices elected by the master was appointed to read a chapter. . . . This being ended, the master did toll a golden bell, hanging over his head, thereby giving warning to one of the novices to come to the high table and say grace. And so after grace said they departed to their books."*

"But before their work," says the writer, "the monks were accustomed every day after they had dined to go through the cloister . . . into the centre garth, where all the monks were buried. And they did stand all bareheaded a certain long space praying among the tombs for their brethren's souls, being buried there. And when they had done their prayers, then they returned to the cloister and there did study their books until three o'clock, when they went to Vespers. This was their daily exercise and study every day after they had dined."†

Once more the Durham record affords us a glimpse of what after the church is the centre of the cloistered life—the cloister itself. "In the north side of the cloister, from the corner over against the church door to the corner over against the dormitory door, was all finely glazed from the top to the sill within a little of the ground into the cloister garth. And in every window three pews or studies‡ where everyone of the old monks had his study, each by himself, that when they had dined they did resort to that place of cloister and there studied their books, everyone in his study, all the afternoon till vesper time. This was the exercise every day. All these pews or studies were finely wainscotted very closely,

* *Ibid.*, p. 70. † *Ibid.*, p. 74.

‡ The word used by the author of the "Rites" is *carrell*. Here, as in many other instances, a modern word is substituted for the convenience of the general reader.

all but the forepart, which had carved work, which gave light in at their study doors. And in every study was a desk to lie their books on. . . . And opposite the studies against the church wall stood certain great cupboards of wainscot all full of books with a great store of ancient manuscripts to help them in their study. In these were placed as well the ancient written Doctors of the Church as other profane authors, with divers other holy men's works, so that everyone studied what doctor pleased him the best, having the library at all times to study in besides their pews."*

In the western cloister the novices had a special place appointed for their daily work. "And the master of the novices had a pretty seat of wainscot adjoining . . . over against the stall where they sat, and there he taught the said novices both in forenoon and afternoon. No strangers or other persons were suffered to molest or trouble the said novices or monks in their studies whilst they were at their books within the cloister, and for this purpose there was a porter appointed to keep the cloister door."

From study the monks went at three each afternoon to chaunt their Vespers in the church. This evening service was performed with as great solemnity as the morning mass. And at both the youths of the singing school, supported for the purpose in the greater monasteries, attended to join their voices with the brethren in their choral service.

Vespers over, the monks returned once more to the cloister, till the tolling of the bell announced the evening meal. "The subprior," says our old authority, "did always dine and sup with the whole convent, and sat at the upper end of the table. And when every man had supped, which

* *Ibid.*, p. 70.

did always end at five o'clock, upon the ringing of a bell (he) gave warning to say grace. (This) being said, they departed to the chapter-house, to meet the prior every night, there to remain in prayer and devotion till six o'clock. At this time, upon the ringing of a bell, they went to *Salve.*"* The hour of Compline over, and a brief space devoted to private prayer, all retired to the dormitory till "the bells which rung ever at midnight—for the monks went evermore to their matins at that hour of night"—proclaimed with the new day another round of prayer and labour.

There were times when the daily discipline was relaxed in favour of conversation in the common room, or even of the mild dissipation of quiet games for the younger brethren and other social enjoyments. No picture of the religious life can be complete without a notice of this phase of conventual existence. The Benedictine monk had no pretence to be considered a misanthrope. Neither did his calling claim to bar him from reasonable recreation. "On the right hand as you go out of the cloisters," says the old writer, "was the common house. The house was to this end, to have a fire kept in it all the winter for the monks to come and warm them at, being allowed no fire but that only, except the masters and officers of the house, who had their special fires. There was belonging to the common house a garden and a bowling alley at the back of the house towards the water for the novices sometimes to recreate themselves when they had leave of their master, he standing by to see good order kept. Also in the same house the master of it kept his *O Sapientia* once a year, viz., between Martinmas and Christmas, a solemn banquet which the prior and convent used at that time of

* *Ibid.*, p. 73.

the year only. Their banquet was of figs and raisins, ale and cakes, and thereof no superfluity or excess, but a scholastical and moderate congratulation amongst themselves."*

This glimpse of the daily routine of an English monastery afforded us, chiefly by the happy recollections of one who remembered Durham before the suppression, is sufficient to dispel the traditional notion that the monk either on the one hand was a gloomy person, or on the other led a life of ease and sloth.

In the chronicles and memorials of the various abbeys we still possess, very little information can be gleaned about the interior and domestic life of the inmates. The reason for this is obvious. To the chronicler, as he wrote his volume in the cloister of his monastery, the daily course of the monastic life was so even, uneventful and well known, that it must have appeared useless and unnecessary to enter any description of it in his pages. The saying "happy is the nation that has no history" applies to monasteries. Troubles, difficulties, quarrels and even scandals find a place on the parchment record of an abbey or convent, while the days and years of peaceful unobtrusive labour would pass unnoticed by the monastic scribe.

In one of his suggestive lectures Mr. Ruskin bids his hearers note well the dates A.D. 421 and A.D. 481, for they are the years of the beginning of Venetian power and of the crowning of Clovis: "Not for dark Rialto's dukedom nor for fair France's kingdom only," he adds, "are these two years to be remembered of all others in the wild fifth century, but

* *Ibid.*, p. 75.

because they are also the birth years of a great lady, and a greater lord of all future Christendom, St. Genivieve and St. Benedict."* If St. Benedict could claim any country as his own it is England. There is no need to dwell here on the evangelization of our land, on the messengers he sent hence to Germany and to the North to preach the gospel, on the schools in which he gathered his disciples and whence issued the revival of letters in the darkest days of the middle ages, on the slow patient labour by which his sons reclaimed the soil, nor on the men through whom our very polity and law seem to have gained their temper and moderation from his spirit of discretion. All this is acknowledged though so easily forgotten. All was done so quietly, so orderly, so naturally, that a world which has entered on the fruits of the labour may almost be excused if it does not recognize the hand that dug the soil and planted the tree.†

The benefits conferred by the monastic order were great. Those who experienced them had no doubt on that score and were not behindhand in full and ample expression of their gratitude. And though the religious bodies were not as rich as they were represented to be, their wealth was undoubtedly immense. Various orders shared it, but the Benedictines, including in their ranks, besides the Black monks, the Cistercian, the Cluniac, the Grandmontain and others had incomparably the greater part. Independently of their wealth, what gave the Benedictines further dignity was the possession of eight or nine cathedrals, including those of the specially dignified sees of Winchester, Durham and Canter-

* "Our fathers have told us," ii., p. 42.

† See cardinal Newman, "Historical Sketches," ed. 1873, iii., p. 365, *et seq.*; J. S. Brewer, "Giraldus Camb.," iv., Pref. xv.-xvii., xxx.-xxxvi., and J. M. Kemble, "Codex," i., Pref. v.-vii.

bury. This placed the election of the bishops of these dioceses in the hands of the convent. At Canterbury, in particular, the jurisdiction of the great metropolitical church fell, during a vacancy, into the hands of the prior and convent. In their name ran all licenses for the consecration of bishops; they held all the archiepiscopal powers of visitation; they could nominate the consecrating prelate and the prelate to preside at convocation. It may be readily understood that these powers were not always viewed with favour by the college of bishops; but after the thirteenth century, with a prudent use of acknowledged rights on the one side and benevolence on the other, they managed to avoid disagreement. Although holding the cathedral churches, the monks did not interfere with diocesan administration. The bishop's officials were commonly chosen from the secular clergy, even when he himself happened to be a monk. It is almost a commonplace however to dwell on the rivalry between the clergy and the monasteries as if it were intensified in the later ages. Unquestionably there were lawsuits about property and other rights between them, and misunderstandings such as will happen between men of all classes; but their relations seem to have been generally good and even, and exempt from any systematic petty bickering.

The privileged ecclesiastical position of the monastic orders found its counterpart in parliament. Abbots formed the bulk of the spiritual peerage, which in those times was both individually more influential and corporately much larger than at present. The position held by them throughout every part of the country gave yet a further weight to their great position as noblemen and local magnates. As such they went *pari passu* with baron or earl of the noblest lineage. On the blazoned

Roll of the Lords, the lord Richard Whiting and the lord Hugh Farringdon went hand in hand with a Howard and a Talbot. This individual enoblement indicated by the form of title is striking. Whiting and Farringdon do not walk merely as the abbot of Glaston and the abbot of Reading, but in the roll of English peers they still hold the name by which they were known when playing as children in the country manor-house or poor man's cottage. In the letter books of Durham priory the chiefs of the Cliffords and the Nevilles address the prior as their equal in no mere words of empty form. If on occasion the layman strikes a higher tone, to which the monk responds in gentleness, it does not affect the ring of trusty and sincere friendship which is caught throughout the whole correspondence. Nor is there anything surprising in this when the character of the monastic life is realised. The monk of Durham from his earliest years combined simplicity of life with surroundings of palatial grandeur and a state and ceremony equal to that of courts, and yet more measured. As time passed on, he grew from obedience to command and naturally, without perceiving it, the peasant's son became the equal of the peer. And all this was done without appeal to principles of democratic levelling. The heralds' "visitations" commence at the moment when the doom of the monasteries was already fixed. Up to that time the art of sifting out the "gentleman" from the "no-gentleman," which under the Tudors and first Stuarts grew to a pitch of perfection, was not yet evolved; and it may be safe to say that the monasteries, in ages, which if any, might seem fatal to it, kept up the idea of personal nobility.

The organisation of the various orders helped to qualify the most prominent of their members for taking part in the

chief council of the realm. Besides their presence in convocation, the Benedictines and Augustinians had each a quadriennial chapter, composed of the abbots and conventual priors of the whole country, and numbering for the Bendictines as many as two or three hundred persons. On these occasions even individual monks, who might be deputed by their superior, could learn the practice of great deliberative assemblies and how to deal with affairs of far-reaching consequence. It was thus not merely by honorific distinction that we find the commissions of the peace generally headed by some principal abbot or prior of each county. They had the practice of business, and they were in touch with men of all ranks—the country gentleman, the yeoman, the artisan, the peasant and the poor. It is no mere figure of speech when monasteries are called the common hostelries for people of all sorts and conditions, the general refuge of the poor. The daily life of the heads and officers of every monastic house must have brought them in constant and natural contact with all classes of society. The monks were not merely anchorites enclosed in narrow walls, but were affected by all the movements of public life. They were not men of war, but, like the knight and the baron, they had to provide men for the musters. As great landowners they, more than the yeoman, were concerned in the crops and the weather. They resided on the land in the midst of their people, and the barns, farmhouses and cottages were no less objects of their care than the roof which covered their own heads. Beyond this, they were more than landowners to those round about them. The advisers and teachers of all, they had the work now undertaken by the guardian, the relieving officer, the parish doctor and the schoolmaster. Their charity did not

flow from public sources, yet all men expected them, as an incident of their profession, to provide for those in want, and they were well acquainted with the circumstances of those they helped. These conditions combined to ease many of the difficulties which attend the relief of the poor. "The myth of the 'fine old English gentleman,' who had a large estate, and provided every day for the poor at his gate, was realized in the case of the monks, and in their case only."*

Art is a finer and truer expression of the inmost mind than even words can be. Of arts, architecture is not the least in power to reveal the soul of man. "Can the same stream send forth waters both sweet and bitter?" says the writer just quoted. "Are the higher realizations of artistic beauty . . . compatible with the disordering, vulgar, and noisy pursuits of an unscrupulous avarice or ambition? Will men that gather meanly scatter nobly? Will any magic convert the sum total of sordid actions into greatness of any kind."†

Though the architecture of the fifteenth century has not the type of Cistercian beauty, the builders of the tower of Canterbury, of the Lady chapel of Gloucester and the church of Bath, the refashioners of Winchester, Chester and Sherborne with a host of other monastic churches, could not have been men devoid either of the sense of beauty or grandeur. It seems in this matter as though, with the close of the civil wars, men had taken fresh heart, and the half century preceding the destruction of the monasteries, so far from being a time of apathy and listlessness, witnessed a great revival of architectural activity. This would have been impossible had the monastic system been commonly in a state of undue

* J. S. Brewer. "Giraldus Camb.," iv., Pref. xxxvi.

† *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

relaxation or degradation. The individual sense of ownership in the common goods is singularly slight in monastic communities. It is altogether inadequate as a spur to keep things in a proper condition. Where the general level of discipline is low the tendency is to shift off the trouble of the day to the morrow. Each man is glad to bear his own burden at the lightest, and that which is the common concern is left to take its course to the verge of ruin. A mere feeling of personal pride, or spurt of personal effort is not sufficient, so strong is the tendency to avoid trouble. The only corrective is, that which is of the essence of the monastic state, a strong and vigorous community life. This can only exist where at least a reasonable amount of order and discipline prevails. Hence the activity in building prevailing in the early sixteenth century has a lesson of its own to tell to those who have the power to read it. However wealthy these great foundations may have been, they could not have undertaken works of such magnitude had not the monastic tone been healthy and vigorous.

Nor was their work achieved, as is so often implied, at the expense of the parish churches. Instances might be multiplied, one will suffice. Within a stone's throw of the cathedral of Coventry stands the church of the Holy Trinity; within a stone's throw of that, again, stands the church of St. Michael—two of the noblest ecclesiastical buildings in the kingdom. Both were in the patronage of the cathedral priory. Had the monks chosen to indulge in unworthy jealousy, the erection of these noble edifices might easily have been prevented. In these cases, it will be understood, the buildings were not for themselves. The Augustinian canons not infrequently served the churches in their own patronage; the

monks as a matter of the rarest exception only. If it be asserted that, by acting in so many instances merely as vicars for the monastic houses, a portion of the secular clergy seemed thereby placed in a position of inferiority and dependence, it must be remembered that to the monastery they often owed their enrolment in the ranks of the clergy at all. Putting aside the education they commonly received in the monastic free schools, it is striking to find in the episcopal registers how large a proportion of the secular clergy were ordained to the "title" given them by some monastery or convent. This fact is emphasized by the extraordinary diminution of candidates for the priesthood immediately subsequent to the destruction of the monasteries, which accounts for the dearth of parochial clergy so often complained of a few years later.*

The only specimen of a monastic chronicle of the times of the civil wars†—that of Croyland, a place remote from the scenes of trouble—gives us a glimpse of continued activity.

* From the archiepiscopal registers of the diocese of York it appears that between 1501 and 1539 there were 6,190 priests ordained. Of these 1,415 were religious, 4,698 were seculars presented for ordination to a *title*, furnished by some monastery or convent, and 77 to a title given by a college, or *ratione beneficii*. The yearly average of ordinations to the priesthood in the diocese of York during the 39 years was over 158. The register of archbishop Edward Lee shows that in 1536, 92 were ordained priests; in 1537 no ordinations were recorded; in 1538 only 20; and in 1539 the ordinations had dwindled down to 8. Of these one, in the first part of 1539, received his title from a religious house, and another in the second half of the year was made priest "to the title of £4 granted him by the king from the monastery of Worksop." After 1539 among the few ordinations are some who present "titles" founded on the promises of some nobleman or gentleman.

† The dearth of late monastic chronicles is very remarkable. It is, however, capable of a simple explanation. In the first place, the generation which produced a Commines, a Machievelli and a Marin Sanudo were hardly fitted for the composition of chronicles such as those of Matthew Paris and William of Malmesbury. Secondly, there is every probability that many such monastic records were destroyed at the dissolution. The little fragment of the monk of St. Augustine's, Canterbury shows that the cloister annalists were still at work.

Besides the free school, the choral necessities required a school of music and singing. Architecture, painting, sculpture, organ building, bell founding and that which English skill had raised to the dignity of an art—embroidery—all were as actively promoted at Croyland as ever. The monks too were not so wedded to old-fashioned ways, but what they were ready to greet the latest discoveries. It must not be forgotten that in England (though not in England only) the first printing presses were set up in the monasteries.

The great religious houses, moreover, afforded to the country population a sight of those splendours now confined to the great centres of population. The rich vestments and costly plate in the monastic treasure-house were no mere personal possession. The enjoyment of them belonged to the people as a whole. As feast day succeeded feast day the treasures were brought forth to delight their hearts as all took part in the rejoicings. Thus the monasteries sent a ray of light and gladness through the lives of the great mass of the people, whose lot at best is full of hardness, dulness and sorrow.

All that is here insisted on is, that in the sixteenth century the monasteries formed an element in English social life both popular and beneficent. For the purpose of this argument

This is not likely to have been a solitary case. Chronicles of this kind, however, would not be like the great folios of the St. Alban's Scriptorium; written on paper, looking mean and poor, and above all having nothing to do with property and estates, they would have been little regarded by the spoilers of the religious houses, and thus lost or destroyed. Thirdly, the rule of the first Tudors was of such a cast, that a Matthew Paris, or even a William of Newbury, that is men disposed to tell the truth, could hardly hope to end their days in their convent. No man can be expected to make a hero of himself merely to gratify the curiosity of posterity. It is little wonder, therefore, if the later monks neglected their annals and turned in preference to other occupations.

it matters little whether the *Comperta* or *Black book* be true or false. If they were true, the case would be stronger still, for it is only an overpowering sense of the benefits which the monasteries generally diffused over the country that, in the presence of such a catalogue of iniquity, could have prevented their fall amid general execration. But what is the case? On the part of the secular clergy, who might be supposed to be their natural rivals, the voice of Bishop Fisher, pre-eminent amongst them all for a love of sound learning and for piety, was raised as spokesman in their defence. Of the nobility, who afterwards shared in the plunder, many a one before the event put in a plea for the preservation of the house in which he himself was interested. The popular voice was expressed in the risings in the east and north, and at a later date in the west. It is only now, when the documentary history of the time is being revealed, that we begin to understand how narrowly these movements escaped a success, which would have changed the course of English history. The voices raised against the monks were those of Cromwell's agents, of the cliques of the new men and of his hireling scribes, who formed a crew of as truculent and filthy libellers as ever disgraced a revolutionary cause. The later centuries have taken their tale in good faith, but time is showing that the monasteries, up to the day of their fall, had not forfeited the goodwill, the veneration, the affection of the English people.

HENRY VIII.

AND

THE ENGLISH MONASTERIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN OF DIFFICULTIES.

No just appreciation of the great social and religious revolution of the sixteenth century is possible without some knowledge of the causes which produced it. "The history of the Reformation in England," writes Lord Macaulay, "is full of strange problems."* That the nation, at the bidding of the Sovereign, and in furtherance of his whims, should acquiesce in the rejection of papal supremacy over the Church, should substitute the doctrine of the spiritual headship of the King, and should tolerate the national upheaval and disregard of the rights of property implied in the dissolution of monasteries and confiscation of their lands and goods, are "problems" to be solved only by an acquaintance with the events preceding and accompanying them.

* Essay on Lord Burleigh.

Circumstances combined to collect in the political and social atmosphere of England in the time of Henry VIII. elements fraught with dangerous and destructive power against the Church. In the first place, it would seem to be certain that the country had not recovered from that terrible visitation, known as the "Black Death," which devastated Europe in the middle of the fourteenth century. Although a hundred and fifty years had elapsed before Henry VIII. mounted the throne, so great had been the ravages of the scourge, and so unsettled had been the interval, that the nation was still suffering from the effects of the great sickness. It could hardly have been otherwise, when in one year, 1348-9, about half of the entire population was swept away. In Norwich city alone 57,304 people, "beside religious and beggars," are said by the chronicler of the time to have died;* in the little town of Bodmin more than 1,500 were buried † in a few months.

Among the clergy the mortality was quite as heavy. In the diocese of Norwich during a single twelvemonth there are recorded the institution of 863 incumbents to livings vacated by the death of the previous occupant, "the clergy dying so fast that they were obliged to admit numbers of youths that had only devoted themselves for clerks by being

* For the facts known about the "Black Death" the reader may consult Mason's "Norfolk," p. 78, &c., and two most interesting articles in Vol. ii. of *Fortnightly Review*, by Professor Seebohm.

† Cole MS., xliii., p. 20.

shaven to be rectors of parishes."* In the County of Norfolk, out of 799 priests 527 died of the plague; and William Bateman, the bishop, applied for and obtained from Pope Clement VI., a bull allowing him to dispense with sixty clerks, who were only 21 years of age, "though only shavelings," and to allow them to hold rectories, as 1,000 livings had been rendered vacant by death, as otherwise service would cease altogether. In the West Riding of Yorkshire, to take another instance, 96 priests out of 141 died; in the East Riding, out of 95, only 35 survived; and altogether it has been computed that about two-thirds of the clergy of England were carried off by the sickness.†

The monastic orders suffered with, perhaps, more severity, because the mortality was greater where numbers were gathered together. William of Worcester records in the Register of Friars Minor at Bodmin a statement that in the general chapter, held in 1351, at Lyons, it was computed the order had lost through the sickness 13,883 members in Europe. Writing of the Diocese of Winchester at this time, a local antiquarian authority ‡ says: "We have no means of ascertaining the actual havoc occasioned among the religious houses of this diocese, or the number of clergy who perished; but in the hospital of Sandown in Surrey there existed

* Mason, p. 78.

† *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. ii.

‡ F. J. Baigent. Note contributed to Life of W. of Wykeham. Burns and Co.

not a single survivor; and of other religious houses in the diocese (which comprises only two counties) there perished no fewer than 28 superiors—abbots, abbesses, and priors—and nearly 350 rectors and vicars of the several parish churches."

Stowe states that in his time there was a tablet at the Charterhouse, London, to commemorate the fact that in the crypt and adjoining burying-ground 50,000 bodies were interred during the twelve months. From Candlemas to Easter 200 interments are said to have taken place each day. Three archbishops of Canterbury in one year were enthroned, only to be carried to the tomb. In the abbey of Croxton, in Lincolnshire, all the monks except the abbot and prior were swept off by the sickness; and at Westminster abbey, the abbot and 26 of his community were committed to a common grave in the southern cloister. Lastly, to give but one more instance, in the abbey of Meaux, out of 50 monks and 10 novices, 40 monks and all the novices died.*

The effect of this vast depopulation was felt for many succeeding generations. According to Knighton's Chronicle† there existed such distress and such a universal "loosening of the bonds of society" as is "only to be found," says Mason, "in the description of earthquakes in South America;"‡

* Hist. MSS. Comm. Append. Rept., ix., p. 127 b.

† Hist. Angl. Scr. decem.

‡ Norfolk, p. 78.

whole villages died out, cities shrunk within their walls, and the houses becoming unoccupied fell into ruins. The agricultural population suffered as severely as that of the towns, and the land fell out of cultivation on account of the difficulty of securing labourers, except at enormous wages. Flocks were attacked by disease and perished from want of herdsmen to watch them; the corn crops, which were unusually rich in the year 1348, rotted on the ground, as no harvestmen were to be found to reap them. The monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury, even with its rich endowments, felt the pinch of poverty. In asking from the bishop of Rochester the impropriation of the church of Westerham "to help them to keep up their old hospitality," they plead excessive poverty caused by "the great pestilence affecting man and beast." In furtherance of their suit they forward to the bishop a list of their losses in cattle, which amount to 257 oxen, 511 cows with their calves, and 4,585 sheep, estimated to be worth in money £792 12s. 6d., or more than £16,000 of our money. Nor is this all, for they declare that 1,212 acres of land formerly profitable to them had been rendered useless by an inundation of the sea, from the impossibility of getting labourers to maintain the sea walls.*

Such a state of things, universal throughout the whole of England, produced a crisis between the labourers and their employers, and led to a revolu-

* Hist. MSS. Comm. Rept., v., p. 444.

tion in the system of farming. The nobles and monasteries were no longer able to manage their estates on the old principles; permanent retainers attached to the soil disappeared, and the modern system of letting was introduced. This had far-reaching results. The peasant proprietor became the exception, the population was detached from the soil, and were no longer bound to the lords of the land by the old ties. Gradually, but certainly, this led to the destruction of the power of the nobles and the exaltation of that of the Sovereign, until in the days of Henry VIII. the king of England was practically despotic.

That the country had not recovered from the effects of the scourge by the sixteenth century can be clearly shown. The statutes of the early years of Henry's reign, for the rebuilding of towns and the repair of the streets and houses, show that the result was still visible, and that the scarcity of houses was beginning to be felt. The Venetian Ambassadors, who describe the ruined streets and vacant places in the English towns, and the thinness of the population throughout the country, speak of the effects of a cause which had existed a century and a half before.

To the Church the scourge of 1349 must have been little less than disastrous. Apart from the poverty and distress occasioned by the unoccupied lands, and the consequent diminution of tithes, the sudden removal of the great majority of the clergy

must have broken the continuity of the best traditions of ecclesiastical usage and teaching. Moreover, the necessity which obliged the Bishops to institute young and inexperienced, if not positively uneducated clerics, to the vacant livings, must have had its effects upon many succeeding generations. The monastic houses also sadly suffered, not only in the destruction of their chief source of income by the depreciated value of their lands, and the want of cultivation consequent upon the impossibility of finding labourers in place of the tenants swept off by the pestilence, but more than all by reason of the great diminution of their numbers, which rendered the proper performance of their religious duties, and the diligent discharge of their obligations, as regards monastic discipline, difficult, and often almost impossible. In numbers, and there can be little doubt also in tone, the various religious bodies had not recovered the ground lost during the year of the Black Death by the time of their ultimate dissolution.

The long and bitter feud between the Houses of York and Lancaster must likewise be regarded as an important element in the chain of events which rendered possible the political and social changes of Henry's reign. From the year 1452, when the Duke of York first took up arms to secure the removal of his enemies from the counsels of Henry the Sixth, to the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, England had been the theatre of constant and terrible civil strife. For ten years, from the accession of Edward IV. to

Tewkesbury, there had hardly been any cessation of hostilities; and it was not till the battle of Stoke, in 1487, which finally settled Henry VII. on the throne, that the Wars of the Roses, after lasting thirty-five years, ended.

The insecurity and instability of well-nigh half a century, as well as the brutal ferocity of the long-continued contest, must have stamped a peculiar character upon the men of the early Tudor period.* When Henry VIII. succeeded his father every man of thirty must have had some knowledge of the terrible war within his own personal recollection, whilst his parents must have lived through the whole of it. "The earl of Oxford, one of the few active leaders who survived the war, was still alive. The earl of Surrey, who fought for Richard at Bosworth, was born some time before the beginning of the civil wars, and died just before Henry's first divorce. When that great question was first agitated, every man of seventy had been born in the very year the first blood was shed, was six years old when Edward IV. was declared King, and sixteen when Henry VI. was murdered in the Tower, and his son, prince Edward, at Tewkesbury."†

The obvious result of a knowledge of the danger and troubles of this long civil war, whether derived

* Those who may wish to understand this more fully would do well to read an Essay by H. W. Wilberforce on "Events Preparatory to English Reformation," in Essays on Religion and Literature. Second series. Longman, 1867.

† Wilberforce, *Ibid.*, p. 337.

from personal experience or the relation of parents, was a willingness to hazard everything rather than recur to such a period of distress and bloodshed. Periods of revolution inspire peculiar prudence, and protracted war a determination to cling "to peace and pursue it." Hence the population generally throughout England in the days of Henry had been rendered by circumstances long-suffering, and ready to endure the dictates of his whims and desires rather than to imperil their peace by resistance.

Another indirect and still more important effect of the conflict of the "Roses" upon the times of the Tudors was the destruction of the power of the nobility. In the days of the Plantagenets the real power of the Kingdom was wielded by a comparatively small number of the nobility. Richard II. would have been secure against Bolinbroke, who landed with only fifteen lances, had not the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland joined him with their numerous retainers. His cause attracted to his standard the great men and their followers of the country through which he marched to London. In the same way Edward II. also fell. The Wars of the Roses, however, completed the work begun by the pestilences of the fourteenth century, and finally broke the power of the great nobles. The "Black Death," by altering the conditions of land tenure, and thus depriving the territorial lords of their hold upon the service and lives of their retainers, gradually sapped the secret strength of the ancient nobility,

whilst the civil wars swept away all the pride and flower of the great noble families. It was the deliberate policy of Warwick, the "King-maker," to cut off the chiefs of the opposite party. To the aristocracy the war was fatal. "The indirect and silent operation of these conflicts," writes Mr. Brewer, "was much more remarkable. It reft into fragments the confederated ranks of a powerful territorial aristocracy, which had hitherto bid defiance to the king, however popular, however energetic."*

Still, even when Henry VII. was firmly seated on the throne, his jealous caution seems to have taught him, that though thus broken, the power of the nobles was to be watched. Hence an Act of the Parliament, which met after Bosworth, prohibited any lord giving his livery except to his menial servants. This legislation enabled the King to perpetrate the celebrated act of rapacity recorded of him, when he compelled the earl of Oxford, who had received him with his retainers in livery, to pay £10,000 as a fine, a sum equivalent to the almost incredible sum of £200,000 of our money. †

When Henry VIII. succeeded, although every sign of growing power was eagerly watched and speedily and effectually checked, there was little that the crown had to fear from the hitherto powerful nobility. Thus the position and authority of the

* Calendar I., preface lxxv. [References will be made to the Calendar by Brewer and Gairdner by this word only.]

† Lingard v., 336.

Tudor monarchs was altogether different from that of their predecessors, and the Royal Supremacy passed from a theory into a fact.*

As a consequence the stability which the traditions and prudent counsels of the ancient nobility gave to the ship of state was gone, when it was most needed to weather the rising storm of revolutionary ideas. The new peers, who were created in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to take the place of the old aristocracy, had no sympathy either by birth or inclination with the best traditions of the past. Nor was the age favourable to the production of high-minded and fearless counsellors so much as to the growth of men of quick and active talents. "A period of revolution," writes Macaulay, "forms a class of men shrewd, vigilant, inventive; of men whose dexterity triumphs over the most perplexing combination of circumstances, whose presaging intellects no sign of the times can elude. But it is an unpropitious season for the firm and masculine virtues. The statesman who enters on his career at such a time can form no permanent connections, can make no accurate observations on the higher parts of political science. Before he can attach himself to a party it is scattered. Before he can study the nature of a Government it is overturned. The oath of abjuration comes close on the oath of allegiance. The association which was subscribed yesterday is burned by the hangman to-day. In the midst of

* Calendar I., preface lxxv.

especially of the Augmentation!* Thère hath been much speaking of the pains of purgatory, but a man were as good, in a manner, to come into the pains of hell as into either of those two courts. For if the king have never so little interest, all is ours. So by the subtlety of the law for their own advantage they make many times the king to rob his subjects and they rob the king again. Take for an example:— Look upon the clerks of either of these courts. At his coming in he shall bring in manner nothing but pen and ink and within a little space shall purchase £20, £30, £50, or 200 and 300 marks a year! Well, it is a common saying among the people:— 'Christ, for thy bitter passion save me from the court of the augmentation!' I have known divers who have spent much money in that court and yet at length they have given over their matters and had rather lose all their expenses than to follow it, so endless and so chargeable is that court."

The same contemporary authority speaks of the miserable state of those who were unfortunate enough to be thrown into prison. There, he says, they "are lodged like hogs and fed like dogs." Moreover they were allowed to lie in these wretched prison houses for years without any trial, and if they

* "Complaint," p. 24. It was to this "Court of Augmentation" that the religious, after being turned out of their monasteries, had to look for the pensions promised them. Small though these were in the first year one quarter was deducted by the officials of the Augmentation Office "by way of loan" to the king.

had no money were left to starve. If they, or their friends, could afford to pay for their food they were allowed in some prisons to "pay for themselves four times as much as at any best inn." By all means, says Brinklow, "if a man offend the law let him have the law," but "to imprison a man and starve him is murder."*

The general condition of the people is represented by all writers of the period to have been very miserable. A very large proportion of the population had been connected with agricultural pursuits. In Henry's time the introduction of a novel system of farming, which dispensed with the greater portion of the labourers formerly required to cultivate the soil, caused great distress. The dearth of population, a result of the great sicknesses and the civil wars, had originally thrown much of the land out of use, and had impoverished the landowners and notably the monasteries to a great and alarming extent. The demand for wool, which largely increased in the sixteenth century, as well as the difficulty of procuring labour, had no doubt originally suggested the possibility of turning much of the old tillage land into grass for sheep runs. It has been already pointed out that the change in the feudal tenure of land no longer attached people to the soil, and the tenants being no longer regarded as retainers of their lord, it ceased to be of paramount interest to him to keep them upon his estates. As they ceased to be a source of

* *Ibid.*, p. 27.

strength, they were felt to be burdensome. Pleasure and profit, the former by the multiplication of animals for the chase, the latter by the breeding of oxen and sheep, were better served by expelling the small tenant farming population and throwing the land into large enclosed grazing farms.

Complaints of the hardships caused to the rural population by this process of "emparkment" were numerous and urgent. In 1514 a petition was presented to Henry VIII. to beg him to remedy the state of things brought about by the action of the great landowners in throwing many small farms into one large one, and by the consequent neglect of tillage. The petition states that many gentlemen, merchant adventurers, clothmakers, and others have occupied ten, twelve, and even sixteen farms. By reason of this, it says, whole villages of twenty and thirty houses have been cleared of their inhabitants, and a solitary shepherd was employed on land which had hitherto provided occupation for sixty or eighty persons.* The various statutes† of Henry's reign against "enclosures," &c., show how acute must have been the distress occasioned by the change of land tenure. Coverdale speaks of the multitude of poor who go about the country begging,‡ and Sir Thomas More, in his "Utopia," which, according to the opinion of Mr. Brewer, gives the best account of

* State Papers Hen. VIII., Vol. ix., No. 431.

† *e.g.*, 7 Hen. VIII., c. 1; 25 Hen. VIII., c. 13.

‡ Transl. of Bible, 1535, quoted in Lewis's "Fisher."

the real condition of the people,* paints a very sad picture of the times. "In whatsoever parts of the country," he writes, "the wool is finer and consequently more valuable, there the nobility and gentry and some abbots, holy men as they were, not content with the yearly rents and profits of their lands, which their ancestors enjoyed, nor reckoning it sufficient that living in ease and plenty they did no good, but rather harm, to the public, left nothing for the plough, but laid all down to pasture, demolished houses, destroyed whole towns, leaving only the church standing to fold their sheep in. So that as an unsatiable glutton, and a direful plague of the country, the fields being laid all in one, some thousands of acres were fenced with only one hedge. The farmers with their families were ejected; they were dispossessed by being either over-reached by fraud or overcome by violence, or else, being quite wearied out with abuses, were forced to sell what they had; and so the poor wretches were obliged, at any rate, to shift their quarters, men and women, husbands and wives, orphans and widows, parents and their children."†

In the midst of the throes of a great social crisis much depended upon the Church. There can be little doubt that the clergy of the time were ill-fitted

* Calendar Introd. cclxxviii. "If anyone wishes to see the real condition of Europe at this period (1515, 1518) he . . . may read with advantage the 'Utopia' of Sir Thomas More."

† "Utopia." Bk. I.

to cope with the forces of revolution, to calm the restless spirit of the age, or resist the rising tide of novelties. Their very character was in itself out of joint with the times. In the days when might was right, and the force of arms the ruling power of the world, the occupation of peace, to which the clergy were bound by their sacred calling, roused hostile and violent opposition from the party rising into power. The bishops were, with some honourable exceptions, mere court officials pensioned out of ecclesiastical revenues. Holding their high offices by royal favour rather than on account of special aptitude to look after the spiritual welfare of their dioceses, they appear, perhaps not unnaturally, to have had little heart in their work. Too frequently, also, the holding of a see was regarded as a temporary position, and as an earnest of appointment to another, pecuniarily or socially, more advantageous. Thus, looking to obtain future favours, a bishop's energies were often directed to obtain promised or expected preferment, rather than to the management of his present district.* This place-seeking kept the lords spiritual much at court, that they might gain or maintain sufficient influence to support their claims

* In 1511, for example, the Bishop of Bath and Wells had been Bishop of Hereford; the Bishop of Chichester had been translated from St. Davids; Bishop Audley had held Rochester and Hereford in succession and was then at Salisbury; the Bishop of Lincoln had been at Lichfield; Bishop Fitzjames, translated as an old man to London, had held Rochester and Chichester previously. Fox had been Bishop of Exeter, Bath and Wells, Durham, and Winchester.

Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester.

to further promotion. They looked to the king, not to the Church, and regarded the temporal adjuncts of prosperity and power rather than the spiritual duties and obligations of the episcopal office.

Too often, also, the bishop of an important see would be occupied in the management of the secular affairs of state. Perhaps, even, he was paid for these services by the emoluments of his ecclesiastical office. To the king all looked for hope of reward, and to royalty all clung as long as there remained any prospect of success. The Church had few favours to give except at the wish and by the hands of the king. "Even Cardinal's hats were bestowed only on Royal recommendation."* The episcopal see was, moreover, not unfrequently, looked upon as a *property* conferred for political services and out of which the most, in a temporal point of view, was to be made. The higher spiritual and pastoral duties were often forgotten when a bishopric was sought or retained by one having no higher ideal than that of temporal advantage. Only when declining years made the struggle for position less possible, or when failure to please made absence from court advisable, did the bishop too often come to spend his remaining years in his diocese, and devote his expiring energies to his flock. The worship of wealth and influence, the struggle after power and position, in which too many churchmen joined, and the employment of energy which should

* Friedmann i., p. 137.

have been devoted to purposes ecclesiastical upon the secular business of state, were constantly at work, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, sapping the very life of the Church.

"I declare, indeed," says Cardinal Bellarmine, with a preacher's exaggeration, but with a foundation of truth, "that false teaching, heresy, the falling away of so many peoples and kingdoms from the true faith, in fine, all the calamities, wars, tumults, and seditions of these distressing times, take their source from no other cause than because pastors and the other priests of the Lord sought Christ, not for Christ's sake, but that they might eat His bread. For some years before the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresy, as those testify who were then living, there was in ecclesiastical judgments hardly any severity, in morals no discipline, in sacred learning no teaching, towards holy things no reverence: well nigh there was no religion. The renowned glory of the clergy and sacred orders had perished; priests were despised, laughed at by the people, and lay under grave and constant infamy. And whence came all this? Was it not because the pastors did not seek above all else the glory of Christ and the salvation of His sheep, but the loaves and fishes; that is, in their ecclesiastical ministrations they regarded chiefly the income and payments. This was the origin, this the fount of all these evils."*†

* Bellarmine Concio de Dom. Lætare. Ed. Cologne, 1617. Op. vi., p. 296. Serm. xxviii.

† In the Parliament of 1529, among the complaints against the

The practice followed in more than one instance of rewarding foreigners by nominating them to vacant sees in return for services rendered, or as an inducement to help on some royal scheme, was also most obviously detrimental to the well-being of the Church. At one time the three bishoprics of Salisbury, Worcester, and Llandaff were all held in this way, by those whose only interest in the dioceses appears to have been the fees they obtained out of them. The bishop of Worcester lived and died in Rome, and his predecessor and successor were also foreigners.

No less detrimental to the well-being of the Church in England at this time was the crying abuse and scandal of pluralities. The holding of many livings by one man was no new grievance. At the end of the thirteenth century, according to archbishop Winchelsea's register, there were some that had fifteen, others thirteen, while one held no fewer than twenty-three benefices. The twenty-three clergymen given in the list held an average of eight livings each.* In the sixteenth century there was still grave cause of complaint, some priests having as many as ten or twelve benefices and very possibly resident on none, while there were "plenty of learned men in the universities" for whom no preferment could be

...rh was that, spiritual persons promoted to great ... their flock, were living in the Court, in ... ll of their parishioners without spending anything at all amongst them." Also relief of the poor was neglected, as well as preaching.

* Bishop Gibson's "Codex," p. 946.

† "Complaints against Clergy in Parl." 1529, No. 6.

found. Cardinal Wolsey himself set the example. He held not only a plurality of livings, but was bishop of more than one see, whilst he farmed others. He also obtained the abbey of St. Albans *in commendam.* Although the Parliament of 1529 especially legislated against this abuse, the exceptions were so numerous as to make the Act ridiculous and nugatory. Every spiritual man of the king's council, for example, was allowed to keep three livings ; every chaplain of the queen or royal family two each ; archbishops and dukes might keep six chaplains ; each marquis and earl five, and every chaplain might hold two benefices. The same privilege was extended to every doctor of divinity and to so many others that the holding of more than one benefice could hardly be called an exception. * At this time also benefices were bestowed upon the young of good family, who had sufficient influence to secure these preferments. Thus, for example, Reginald Pole, the future Cardinal, when only seventeen was nominated to the prebendal stall of Roscombe, and two years later to Gatcombe Secunda, both in the Salisbury diocese. At eighteen he received the deanery of Wimborne Minster.†

The non-residence of bishops in their dioceses was a fruitful source of evil. The episcopal func-

* "Statutes at Large," ed. 1763, Vol. iv., p. 181.

† Calendar ii., No. 3943.—"Starkey's Dialogue between Pole and Lupset," E. Eng. Text Soc., Preface, cxiii.—21 Hen. VIII., c. 13.

tions were very generally relegated to suffragans, who instead of being assistants became practically substitutes for their principals in all the spiritual work of a diocese. Not unfrequently, these suffragans were bishops of Irish sees, who resided in England to the neglect of their own cure, and undertook the supervision of more than one diocese. Upon such auxiliaries rectories or other ecclesiastical preferments were bestowed in lieu of payment for their services, and these in turn were left to the care of ill-paid curates. Neglect of duty more or less extended to the entire body of the clergy, who deprived of proper oversight and paternal guidance, quickly followed the example of non-residence set by their superiors. The result was lamentable so far as the care and instruction of the people was concerned. By law the clergy were appointed to preach in their parishes at least four times in the year, but even from this minimized obligation exemptions were frequent, all chaplains and graduates of the university having an immunity. The successor of Wolsey in the archiepiscopal see of York, Dr. Edward Lee, reports that in the whole of his diocese he could find only twelve of the parochial clergy able and willing to preach to their people.*

For many successive years, for example, the diocese of Bath and Wells knew its bishops more by report than personal contact. From the death of bishop Beckington in 1464, the work of the see had been

* R. O., Box. R. 60. Strype Eccl. Mems. i., p. 291.

almost invariably carried on by commissioners *in spiritualibus* and suffragans. It had the ill-fortune to fall into the hands of some too busily engaged in the king's matters to attend to the spiritual wants of their diocese; it had been held by a foreigner, and then farmed by Wolsey. From neglect and its remaining long unoccupied and unfurnished, the very episcopal palace at Wells had fallen into utter ruin and decay. Richard Fox, one of the bishops, was an excellent example in that age; yet what can be said in his defence, when his episcopal duties sat so lightly upon his conscience that though he was consecrated as bishop of Exeter in 1487, removed to Bath and Wells in 1491, and translated to Durham in December, 1494, he yet never saw his cathedral at Exeter nor set foot in his diocese of Bath and Wells.

The occupation of the bishops in affairs of state, besides its disastrous effect on the clergy, had another result. By it a jealous opposition to ecclesiastics was created in the minds of the new nobility. The lay lords and hungry officials not unnaturally looked with dislike upon this employment of ecclesiastics in secular concerns. The occupation of clerics in all the intrigues of party politics, and in the wiles of foreign and domestic diplomacy, conduced to keep them out of coveted preferment. Hence when occasion offered they did not need much inducement to turn against the clergy and enable Henry to carry out his coercive legislation against the Church.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising to find that neglect of religion and practical heresy was largely on the increase at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Foxe records the names of no fewer than twenty-three heretics who were compelled to abjure their errors by Fitz-James, the bishop of London, during 1510-11. In November, 1511, so serious were these heretical opinions considered that Henry VIII. ordered the archbishop of Canterbury to summon a convocation to meet in the February of the following year at St. Paul's, and amongst other things to take into consideration the extirpation of heresy.* Archbishop Warham made choice of Colet, dean of St. Paul's, to preach on the occasion of this assembly of the clergy, and his sermon is, perhaps, the most valuable contemporary account of the state of the Church in England at that time.

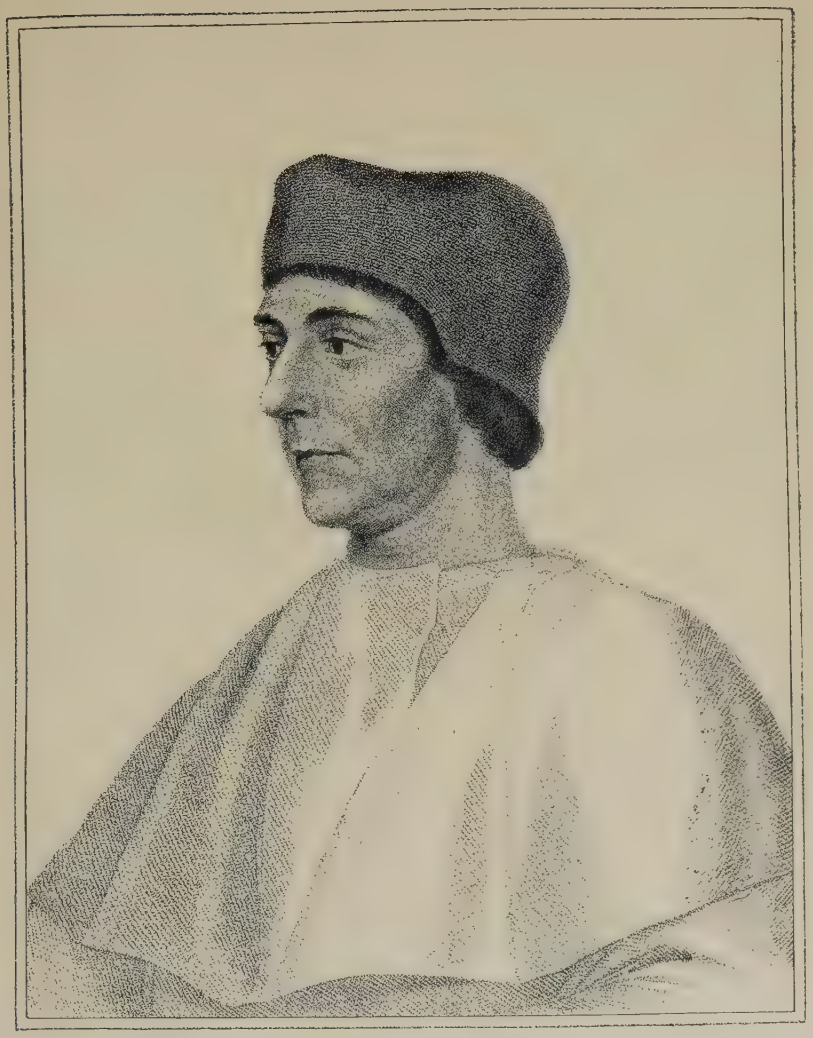
Taking for his text the words of St. Paul to the Romans—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"—the learned and uncompromising dean proceeded to speak boldly against "the fashion of secular and worldly living in clerks and priests."

To this secularity of priests' lives dean Colet attributed all the evils which had befallen the Church, and he earnestly begged the English clergy to turn their mind to reformation of abuses if they

* Calendar i., 2004, 4312.

would desire to escape from the dangers to religion which could be so plainly foreseen. There was no need for new laws, but that those which existed should be put in force. Ordination should be given only to such as led pure and holy lives, and the laws against clerics and monks occupying themselves in secular business should be put in force. Also "let the laws be rehearsed," begged the preacher, "that command the personal residence of curates (rectors) in their churches. For of this many evils grow, because all things nowadays are done by vicars and parish priests; yea, and those foolish, also, and unmeet and oftentimes wicked, that seek none other thing in the people than foul lucre, whereof cometh occasion of evil heresies and ill Christianity in the people."

So, too, in this respect bishops should first look to themselves. They should diligently look after the souls of those committed to them, and reside in their dioceses. Their revenues should not be spent on "feasting and banqueting," nor upon "sumptuous apparel and pomps," but "in things profitable and necessary to the Church. For when St. Augustine, some time bishop of England, did ask pope Gregory how that the bishops and prelates of England should spend their goods that were the offerings of faithful people, the said pope answered (and this answer is put in the decrees, in the twelfth chapter and second question) that the goods of bishops ought to be divided into four parts, whereof one part ought to be to the bishop and his household, another



Dr. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's.

to his clerks, the third to repair and uphold his tenements, the fourth to the poor people." *

The state of affairs thus described in the sermon of the dean to the clergy in 1512, was doubtlessly reflected in the monastic orders of England. The events of the previous century and a half must necessarily have done much to lower the tone of the religious houses and rob them of their primitive fervour. Before they could recover from the effects of the great plagues of the fourteenth century the civil disturbances of the fifteenth century intensified the evils from which they were suffering, and became to them "specially disastrous." † Their numbers were so materially diminished by the pestilences, and those that were spared were so far weakened, that it became impossible to maintain the ancient rigours of religious life. Moreover, as has been pointed out, death destroyed rather the fervent religious than those, who through fear of pestilence would be led to neglect the austerities and obligations of their state of life. This must have told greatly against the maintenance of a high moral tone in the religious houses. The same cause plunged the monastic establishments into poverty. In sweeping away their tenants and producing an alteration in the tenure of land, it at the same time weakened their hold on the affections of the people. The long and deadly strife

* Knight's "Life of Colet," pp. 252-264. See also Blunt's "Reformation," pp. 10-18.

† Brewer. "Henry VIII.," i., p. 50.

which preceded the reign of Henry VII., coming upon these troubles, would have also contributed to destroy discipline and engender a spirit of unrest wholly alien to the truer characteristics of the cloistered life. Hence, without doubt, there may have arisen a defection from the fervour of earlier years, and here and there some individual cases of serious delinquency might be found.

The financial state of the monasteries at the commencement of the sixteenth century was undoubtedly deplorable. Although many of them were possessed of considerable estates, which in itself was regarded as a matter of reproach, they were yet suffering from acute poverty. Denuded of their tenants, the monastic lands became neglected and unproductive. "Debt with no chance of redemption weighed heavily upon all."* Claims, however, upon their charity, and the exactions of royal and other founders, increased rather than diminished, till the burden was more than the crippled resources of the religious could bear. The State papers of Henry VIII.'s reign contain abundant proof of the increasing demands made by king and courtier upon monastery and convent. Farm after farm, manor after manor, benefice after benefice, office after office were yielded up, in compliance with requests that were in reality commands. Pensions in ever-increasing numbers were charged on monastic lands at the asking of those it was impossible to refuse. "In some cases," writes Mr.

* Brewer. "Henry VIII.," Vol. i., p. 50.

Brewer, "the abbots were bound to give endowments to scholars of the king's nomination * or provide them with competent benefices; pensions and corrodies were granted under the privy seal to yeomen ushers of the wardrobe and the chamber, to clerks of the kitchen sewers, secretaries and gentlemen of the chapel royal; † and these were strictly enforced, whatever might be the other encumbrances of the house."‡

The royal munificence was liberally exercised in grants of pensions and perquisites when others had to satisfy the recipients of the royal generosity. By established custom every bishop on entering upon the emoluments of his see was bound, "*ratione novæ creationis*," to allow a fitting pension to any clerk recommended by the crown until such time as he had provided a suitable benefice for him. So, in the same way, founders and their descendants claimed and exercised the right of billeting poor relations or needy dependents for maintenance and often for lodging on the religious houses of which they were patrons. Thus, at the command of Henry VIII., the last abbot of Tavistock, on January 16th, 1526, granted to one John Amadas the corrody which had previously been allowed to Henry Coleis, a

* Calendar i., 1235, 1360. Mr. Brewer adds: "One of the most interesting of these cases is that of a pension paid by the Prior of St. Frideswide's, Oxford, to Reginald Pole, then a student at the University of Oxford, afterwards Cardinal." Note, p. 50.

† Calendar i., 49, 60, 106, 615, 920, &c.

‡ Brewer. "Henry VIII.," i., p. 50.

former nominee of the Crown, then lately dead. This corrody is described as "one white loaf," another loaf called "trequarter;" a dish called "general;" another dish of flesh or fish called "pitance;" three "potells" of beer or three silver half-pence daily; also a furred robe at Christmas yearly, of the same kind as that of our squires, or the sum of 20s. When John Amadas was at the abbey he was to be provided with a suitable chamber, stabling for one horse, three candles called "Paris candles," with a fire in his chamber and hay for his horse, "such as one of our esquires receives." When the monastery was dissolved the court of Augmentation, on April 29th, 1539, allowed John Amadas, "in lieu of all these daily comforts and perquisites, an annuity of £5."*

In their endeavour to meet the demands upon their revenue, the abbots and superiors of the religious houses endeavoured to accommodate their farming arrangements to the requirements of the time. Like the nobles and other landowners, they tried to turn their estates to the most profitable account by forming large enclosures, and devoting land hitherto cultivated to the pasture of sheep. This was regarded with great disfavour by the people, who were no longer required in the same numbers as before to make the monastic estates profitable to their owners. In the parliament of 1529 this and the fact that the religious kept "tan houses and sold wool and cloth,"

* See Dr. Oliver's "Monasticon Diœc. Exon.," vi.

&c., were causes of complaint against them by the Commons. The fact also that the same grievance was mentioned by Sir Thomas More in his "Utopia," and that Wickliffe had complained that "Where in many abbeys should be, and sometimes were, great houses to harbour poor men therein, now they be fallen down or made swinecots, stables, or bake-houses," seems to show that the change was bitterly felt by the people, who were unable to understand the need which compelled the religious to make the most of their property. There is no doubt that the writings and declamations of Wickliffe and the Lollards had done something to undermine the reverence in which the religious orders were held by the mass of the people. "Writers," says Edmund Burke, of the period of the French Revolution, "especially when they act in a body and with one direction, have great influence on the public mind. . . . These writers, like the propagators of all novelties, pretended to a great zeal for the poor and the lower orders, whilst in their satires they rendered hateful by every exaggeration the faults of courts, of nobility, and of the priesthood."*

It is difficult for the popular mind to resist the influence of attractive pictures presented to it. The advantages to be derived from a redistribution of the worldly wealth of the Church, and in particular of the religious bodies in England, were constantly insisted upon. And the poison instilled into the people by

* Reflections on French Revolution, ed. Bohn. ii., p. 384.

scurrilous tales and descriptions of clerical and monastic life, circulated by their authors for the purpose of bringing discredit upon the Church, was no doubt insidious. These generally were not indigenous, but imported, venerable stories, Eastern in their origin and adapted from Mahometan life to suit the Christian character; but even they could not deprive the religious bodies of popular respect.

The most celebrated and perhaps most dangerous attack against the religious orders made in the early sixteenth century was in the "Supplication of Beggars," written by one Simon Fish. It was answered by Sir Thomas More, step by step, in his "Supplication of Poor Souls;" but, like all such stories, the answer probably reached only a few of those who had accepted the wild statements of Fish's fables. Although aimed chiefly against the mendicant friars, the "Supplication of Beggars" involved in one sweeping condemnation the whole of the spirituality, described as "bishops, abbots, priors, deacons, archdeacons, suffragans, priests, monks, canons, friars, pardoners, and summoners." This curious collection of personages was declared by the writer to have got into their hands more than a third part of the realm, and this estimate of the wealth of the Church was constantly quoted and accepted by subsequent authors. The value of the computation may, however, be judged by the fact that it is based on the assertion that there were at the time in England fifty-two thousand parish churches. Upon this

statement Sir Thomas More remarks: "That is one plain lie to begin with." Not contented with this estimate, the author goes on to assert that the Church really has nearer one-half than a third of the entire wealth of the realm. It is only one step further to declare, as he does in the next sentence, that it has this half. Then, with natural indignation, he asks why the spiritual portion of the population, who are to the laity only in the ratio of one to four hundred, should thus have half of the riches of the country?

A still more wonderful calculation was made by Simon Fish as to the amount collected by the mendicant friars each year. He starts with his old premiss of the fifty-two thousand parishes, and counts an average of ten households in each. These, he considers, would every one contribute a penny each quarter to every one of the five orders of friars. By a simple process of multiplication he thus obtains no less a sum than £436,333 6s. 8d. contributed yearly to the begging friars in England. According to such a calculation, these orders obtained by begging twice as much as the entire revenues of all the monasteries,* and more than the whole yearly income of the Church in England, which, according to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII., was only £320,280 10s.

Still, even these and similar falsehoods, although appealing to the cupidity of the people, do not seem

* Stated by Tanner as £142,914 12s. 9¾d.

to have alienated from the monks the affections of the general population. The insurrections in their favour is an indication of the opinion of the people themselves, in spite of all that had been said and written against them. Henry Brinklow, a mendicant friar who had thrown off his frock, and was therefore on two accounts little likely to favour the monasteries, bears testimony to the way in which they discharged their duties to the people. "And when they," he writes, "had gifts of any (churches) not impropriated, they gave them unto their friends, of which always some were learned; for the monks found of their friends children at school. And though they were not learned, yet they kept hospitality, and helped their poor friends. And if the parsonages were impropriated, the monks were bound to deal alms to the poor, and to keep hospitality, as the writings of the gifts of such parsonages and lands do plainly declare, in these words: '*in puram eleemosinam.*' And as touching the alms that they dealt, and the hospitality that they kept, every man knoweth that many thousands were well relieved of them, and might have been better if they had not had so many great men's horses to feed, and had not been overcharged with such idle gentlemen*

* A curious illustration of this may be seen in a letter from the son of the Duke of Buckingham to Henry VIII. It is evidence of the services rendered by the monasteries to honourable families in reduced circumstances. "And because," the writer says, "he hath no dwelling place meet for him to inhabit (he was) fain to live poorly at board in an Abbey this four years day, with his wife and seven children."

as were never out of the abbeys. And if they had any vicarage in their hands they set in sometimes some sufficient vicar (though it were but seldom) to preach and to teach."* He goes on to say that the land was given to the monastic houses for education, hospitality, and to give alms to the poor, and that they were pulled down on the "pretence" of amending what was amiss. "But see," he continues, "how much that was amiss is amended, for all the godly pretence. It is amended, even as the devil amended his dame's leg (as it is in the proverb): when he should have set it right he broke it quite in pieces, The monks gave too little alms, but now, where £20 was given yearly to the poor in more than a hundred places in England, is not one meal's meat given. This is fair amendment."

Into the general state of moral discipline to be found within the monasteries of England at the beginning of the sixteenth century it will be necessary to examine more particularly in considering the charges brought against them to justify their dissolution. It may, however, be here stated that the most authentic evidence upon the subject is to be found in the episcopal registers of the various dioceses. These contain records, more or less minute, of the visitations made by the Bishops to the monasteries within the limits of their special jurisdiction. Their injunctions and other acts prove the care with which the duty of supervision was

* "Complaint of Roderyck Mors." E. Eng. Text. Soc. ed., p. 33.

exercised. Many monasteries, and even orders, were, of course, altogether exempted from episcopal control; but such exemptions were by no means as common as is generally stated. There is no reason whatever to suppose that the condition of the exempt religious was in any way worse than the rest. On the contrary, they were, as a rule, the larger monastic houses* which enjoyed the privilege, and in these, as the preamble of the Act of Parliament which suppressed the lesser houses expressly declares, "thanks be to God religion is right well kept." It is not too much, therefore, to regard the evidence furnished in the pages of these episcopal registers as giving a faithful picture of the state of the religious houses. It is certainly very different from that which Crumwell's agents have drawn, and which has been traditionally regarded as trustworthy by subsequent generations of Englishmen. The acts of many of these visitations are still preserved to us.† They prove conclusively the extreme care taken by

* This will hold good of Cistercians and Cluniacs with some others. But in regard to the Benedictines, who held nearly all the monasteries of the first rank, absolute exemption in practice must not be too easily assumed. To say nothing of the wealthy cathedral priories, such monasteries as Glastonbury in the south and St. Mary's, York, in the north, seem from the bishops' registers to have been subject to little less than ordinary episcopal visitation. These are cited as instances only.

† Besides those to be found in the Registers, two valuable volumes of the visitations of the religious houses of the diocese of Norwich from 1514 to 1532 are among the Tanner MSS. in the Bodleian. Nos. 132 and 210.

the bishops in the examination of the individual members of a community, and in the correction of such faults as they were thus enabled to discover. "They" (the bishops), writes Dr. Oliver, "appear to have considered this as a duty of primary importance; in fact, the attention which they paid to this point contributed above all other things to support regular discipline and to prevent licentiousness."*

From a careful study of the records of the diocese of Exeter the same learned authority is able to state positively that the "grosser immoralities were far from common" in the conventual establishments of that diocese. This view will be endorsed by all those who may take the trouble to examine into this source of authentic information. The graver irregularities which are recorded against the religious after the most searching scrutiny, made by the bishops or their commissioners, are after all few and far between; and the extreme punishment with which such irregularities were visited proves that, so far from not being heeded, the moral reputation of the monastic and conventual establishments was considered of the first importance. The faults principally noted are breaches of regular discipline, such as absences from choir or laxity as regards enclosure. Breaches of the vows of poverty or obedience are sternly corrected. Perpetual silence is enforced in the dormitory and elsewhere. Necessary repairs for the conventual

* "Historic Collections for Devon." Preface, p. 11.

buildings are ordered and provision is made for the proper support of the members of the community. Such are the injunctions which are generally to be found as the result of the episcopal scrutiny, and not uncommonly, when things were more than ordinarily out of order, the visitation, so far as the plenitude of episcopal power went, was continued for six or even twelve months. Then another visit determined whether the faults complained of were sufficiently corrected to warrant the termination of the visitors' supervision.

It would be affectation to suggest that the vast regular body in England was altogether free from grosser faults and immoralities. But it is unjust to regard them as existing to any but a very limited extent. Human nature in all ages of the world is the same. The religious habit, though a safeguard, gives no absolute immunity from the taint of fallen nature. The religious of the sixteenth century had passed through many difficulties dangerous to their spiritual no less than to their temporal welfare. Yet, while their moral tone had probably been lowered by the influence of the spirit of the times, the graver falls were certainly confined to individual cases. Anything like general immorality was altogether unknown among the religious of England. This much is clearly proved by the testimony of the acts of episcopal visitations, as well as by the absence of any such sweeping charge till it became necessary for Henry and his agents to blast the fair name of the monastic

houses in order the more easily to gain possession of their property.

The reports of Crumwell's visitors no doubt represented the religious houses as being in the worst possible state of moral degradation. Still, subsequent authors have improved upon the picture, and have drawn to a great extent upon their imagination. It is to be hoped that a better knowledge of the methods employed by Henry's agents to blacken the character of those they were about to despoil may lead to a truer appreciation of the value to be attached to their testimony.

CHAPTER II.

PRECEDENTS FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF MONASTERIES IN ENGLAND.

BEFORE considering the systematic suppression of monasteries inaugurated under cardinal Wolsey the various precedents for confiscation of this nature afforded by English history may be briefly stated. They mostly relate to religious houses known as "alien priories," and the action taken at different times against them was dictated rather by patriotic and prudent motives in periods of foreign wars, than by any royal desire to dispossess the monks of their property for the purpose of increasing the kingly revenues.

Alien priories were almost entirely the result of the Norman Conquest. The bishops and barons, who obtained so much of the conquered land, were connected by blood and interest with the country from which they came. Many of them were the descendants of the noble founders of the great foreign monasteries, and many were united to these houses by close personal ties. It was but natural

that these monasteries should share in the wealth which the fortune of war had bestowed upon their friends and patrons. When churches, manors, and tithes in England came thus into the possession of the Norman abbeys, the monks, to guard their rights and collect their revenues, built small cells or convents on their lands which are known as alien priories.

Under the first kings of the Norman dynasty, from William I. to Henry II., many such establishments sprang up in England. Some were conventual, paying a yearly tribute,* which at first was the surplus of the revenue, to the foreign mother house. Others depended entirely upon the houses abroad, which appointed the superiors at will and maintained the English establishment solely for the purpose of collecting and guarding the rents and tithes which were sent over the sea to support the abbey and its foreign dependencies. The religious inhabiting these cells, in some cases few, in others more numerous, were at first obviously aliens, with their sympathies and affections centred in their foreign home. The very object of their existence, which was to forward money out of England, tended to keep these establishments in the possession of foreign religious and to exclude English subjects.

In number, from their first foundation to their final suppression, there are stated to have been from 100

* *Apportus* or acknowledgment.

to 150 alien priories established in England.* And the Cluniac houses alone during the reign of Edward III. are said to have forwarded no less than £2,000 a year (about £60,000 of our money) to the monastery of Cluny. When France and England were at peace this transmission of wealth out of the country was tolerated by the English rulers. War, however, brought the subject prominently before them and led to various acts of suppression and confiscation. King John, it is said, seized the priories dependent on the foreign houses and applied their revenues to the relief of his own necessities. † These, numbering eighty-one, were compelled to pay into the royal treasury the sum hitherto sent abroad. The first serious action, however, was taken against them by king Edward I. In 1294 that monarch determined to make war upon France for the recovery of the province of Guienne, and in the following year hostilities commenced. Edward had the greatest difficulty in finding money to defray his expenses for the coming campaign, and had recourse to many bold and despotic expedients. ‡ With difficulty he obtained a tenth from the laity, and from the clergy he personally demanded half the income arising from both their lay fees and benefices. To this unheard-of exaction, after vigorous opposi-

* Dugdale in the "Monasticon" gives only 100. Weever, p. 338, says they were in number 110. The author of a small work on "Alien Priories," A.D. 1779, gives the names of 146.

† Dixon, "Hist. of Church of Eng.," i., p. 321.

‡ Lingard. Vol. iii., capt. 3.

tion, they submitted. To avoid, however, future demands of a similar nature, they applied to Boniface VIII. for a bull, by which the clergy, under pain of excommunication, were forbidden to grant the revenues of their benefices without the previous permission of the Holy See. At this time the king seized all the alien priories, to the number of about a hundred, and used their revenues for the prosecution of his French war. In order, moreover, to prevent the foreign monks in England acting as spies and rendering other assistance to his enemies, he forced them to remove from their houses to a distance of twenty miles from the sea-coast. *

This precedent was subsequently often followed during the English wars with France. Edward II., for example, on the same plea, took the alien priories into his own hands, appointing the priors or guardians to pay to him the various sums they were otherwise bound to transmit to their foreign superiors. The priories of Pantfield and Wells, for instance, were given to the custody of Robert de Stokes, then prior of the former, on condition of his paying to the king the accustomed £76 a year. That these sums were paid is not so certain, for when Edward III. came to the throne in 1327, on restoring the alien priories to their original owners, he expressly remitted and pardoned all arrears. †

* Dixon, p. 321.

† Rymer, iv., p. 246. Claus. Rot., 1 Ed. III., p. 1, m. 22. This seizure by Ed. II. of the alien priories is not mentioned by his-

Under Edward II. the suppression of the order of Knights Templar took place. In the first year of his reign, acting on the bull of pope Clement V., which desired the arrest of the knights and inquiry to be made into the charges against them, he apprehended all on the same day. "The process against them," writes Dr. Lingard, "lasted for three years; and if it be fair to judge from the informations taken in England, however we may condemn a few individuals, we must certainly acquit the order." * In 1312 the pope, however, suppressed the institute, not as the necessary result of established guilt, but "as a measure of expediency rather than of justice." † By a subsequent brief, pope Clement bestowed their property upon the kindred order of Hospitallers. Edward, however, suspended the action of this latter bull for more than a year. When, in 1313, he assented, he protested that it was for purposes of national policy, and that it in no way affected his regal rights, or those of his subjects, to the possessions of the suppressed Templars. ‡ The matter remained in abeyance for eleven years, when the Act for their final suppression passed through parliament. This Act declared that by law all the lands

torians, but the document leaves no doubt of the suppression which was carried out on account of the French war "by the late King our Father" (nuper rex Angliæ pater noster).

* Hist. iii., capt. 4. The whole process may be seen in Wilkins ii., 329.

† Rymer, iii., p. 323.

‡ *Ibid.*, iii., 451, 457.

of these knights had reverted to the crown or chief lord. Still, in this particular instance, it ordained that they should not so escheat. The Templars, so parliament declared, had been instituted "for the defence of Christendom, the augmentation of God's service, and liberal almsgiving," and that, according to the minds of the original benefactors and donors of the possessions, the lands ought to be disposed "to goodly uses." "And, therefore, in the same parliament, it is agreed, ordained, and established by law, to continue for ever, that neither our lord the king, nor any other lords of the fees aforesaid, or any other person, hath title or right to retain the foresaid lands and tenements . . . in respect to the ceasing or dissolution aforesaid." The Act further provided that, as the brethren of the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem were instituted for much the same purposes as the suppressed Templars, so the confiscated possessions should be given over to them, according to the presumed wishes of the original donors. These purposes were declared to be, relieving the poor, maintaining hospitality, celebrating divine service and the defence of the Holy Land. * Some portion of the lands, however, had already passed from the king's hands into the possession of laymen. †

Edward III., at the beginning of his reign, re-estab-

* Statutes of the Realm, i., p. 194; 17 Ed. II. (A.D. 1324). Ed. Rec. Comm.

† Rymer, iii., 323.

lished many of the alien priories, * but in 1337, ten years later, on account of the war, he reverted to the policy of his two predecessors. To raise money he not only had recourse to forced loans and pawned his crown and jewels, but once more seized all the property of French aliens, both lay and ecclesiastical.† Amongst the latter the estates of the alien priories again passed into the royal possession. In the Cluniac houses there had long been a feeling of discontent on the part of those English subjects who had there embraced the religious life. In the fourth year of this king's reign, A.D. 1331, they laid their grievances before parliament in the shape of a petition. They stated that, in the opinion of many, the houses were not governed properly; that in some priories, such as Montacute and Bermondsey, which ought to have had from thirty to forty members, there were not a third of the number; that all the revenue thus saved was being sent out of the country; that there was no election allowed them; that not twenty were professed in the province, and that some of the English members were kept forty years before being allowed to take their vows, whilst others were never permitted to do so. The petitioners begged that parliament would insist upon some one in England having powers to settle the question of profession, and they suggested that the prior of Lewes would be a fitting person. Finally, they pointed out that the great evil *(magnum malum)*

* Rymer, iv., p. 246. † *Ibid*, iv., p. 777.

was that the French monks, however few, were always the masters and that English subjects were habitually treated as inferiors. It was difficult, if not impossible, they urged, for them to live together in this way. To this remonstrance the king replied, ordering the matters complained of to be looked to "lest he should have reason to act in a more severe manner."*

Edward III. kept the foreign houses in his hands for twenty-three years. During this time he granted portions of their lands, or lay pensions out of their revenues, to several of his nobles.† In 1361, however, on the conclusion of peace with France, many of these alien priories were restored,‡ but only to be again sequestrated eight years later, for the purpose of raising money to continue the war, which had broken out once again.

A few years later parliament called the attention of the king to the foreign houses. Under several statutes of this and previous reigns it had been declared unlawful for religious persons to send money to their houses beyond the sea, and foreign impositions of all kinds had been forbidden.§ The commons at this time pointed out that, "in consequence of the priories and other religious houses subject to foreign monasteries being filled with

* Reyner, "Apostolatus." Append. iii., p. 147.
† Tanner, Pref. x. Dugdale, "Bar." ii., 74.
‡ Rymer, vi., 311.
§ *e.g.*, 32 and 35 Ed. I.; 25 and 38 Ed. III.

Frenchmen, who acted as spies," such houses became a real national danger. They therefore petitioned "that so long as the war lasted all Frenchmen should be banished the kingdom." But Edward was at this time, in the midst of trouble at home and abroad, approaching the end of his long reign.

In the earlier years of that king some of these monasteries had been naturalized on their own petition. For example, the monks of Thetford abbey represented that the appointment of their superior was in the hands of the abbots of Cluny. This might have been tolerated when the religious were foreigners, but not when they and their prior were all of them English. They wished, therefore, to be freed from their union with the French abbey and from the subsidy required of them by their foreign brethren. In the same way the priory of Holy Trinity, York, asked to be declared an English foundation on the same footing as other religious houses.*

During the reign of Richard II. the estates of these alien priories appear to have remained in the king's hands. For a great number of years the foreign abbeys had derived little profit from their English cells and appear to have been anxious to get rid of them on any advantageous terms. About 1390, therefore, William of Wykeham, having obtained the pope's leave, bought the estates of the alien priories of Hornchurch and Writtle, in Essex,

* Reyner, "Apostolatus." App. iii., p. 209.

for his foundation of New College.* In the same way the priory of Tutbury, in Staffordshire, a cell of the abbey of Dinan, was sold in 1394. It was then in the hands of one Waldgrave, "paying £40 a year into the exchequer, as John Chater, the prior, had wont to do." The abbot and convent of the French abbey declared in their instrument that "by reason of the wars, and distance of the place, they had not received any benefit from it for 50 years." Their charges in sending over always exceeded the profit, and they calculated that "were there perfect peace concluded betwixt the kings of England and France, the benefit would be so small to them that it would suffice for the maintenance of but one religious person." For these reasons, and because the property would be of service to the Carthusian Priory at Coventry, which King Richard II. had lately established there, and in consideration of 2,400 francs "in good gold of French coin" which the Carthusians had paid, they surrendered all their rights over their English cell and its possessions.†

Richard's successor, Henry IV., began by showing favour to the alien priories. In the first year of his reign, 1399, he restored the conventual houses, to the number of thirty-three, reserving in time of war for himself the subsidy they paid in time of peace to their foreign abbeys.‡ A few years after-

* Tanner, Pref. xxii.

† Dugdale, "Warwickshire," by Thomas, i., p. 37.

‡ Rymer, viii., 101-6.

wards, on the advice of his privy council, he again suspended them, taking certain of their revenues for the support of his own household.* In the parliament of 1402 it had been arranged that all these priories should be again suppressed, and the privy council had discussed the question who were the founders of these houses. The archbishop of Canterbury was opposed to the measure, and "accused his opponents," writes dean Hook "(and by the accusation he silenced the present anti-church faction), of having diverted the revenues of the friars-alien from the public purse to their own. . . . And so," he said, "if the King were now to comply with your project, he would not in a year's time be a farthing richer than he is now."†

The fact is, that by this time the influence of the anti-ecclesiastical agitation of Wickliffe's adherents was being felt. The boldness with which his "poor priests" had inveighed against the real or imputed shortcomings of spiritual superiors and the riches with which the church was unduly endowed, had gained for them amongst the laity a considerable following. These, under the name of "Lollards," took up specially the outcry against the endowments of the church at large. In the parliaments of the reign of Henry IV. they were the occasion of many laws against church interests, and their favourers proposed even more sweeping acts than passed into law.

* Hook, "Lives of Archbishops," vi., p. 63.

† *Ibid.*, iv., p. 489. "Minutes of privy council," 190, 199.

In 1405, when the king represented his needs to the assembly known as the "unlearned Parliament," the speaker suggested that he should replenish his exhausted exchequer by helping himself to the goods of churchmen. They possessed, he said, a third part of the property of the country.* The effect of this communistic proposal was destroyed by the action of Thomas Arundel, the archbishop of Canterbury, who having spoken strongly in the assembly against the suggestion, fell on his knees before Henry and begged him not to listen to such counsel. The king declared that nothing should induce him to touch property which had been once devoted to the uses of the church. Then, turning to the commons, the archbishop said: "You and such like as you have advised both our lord king and his predecessors to confiscate the goods and lands of the alien priories and religious houses, on pretence he should gain great riches by it, as, indeed, they were worth many thousands;" but since you have begged from him the lands thus taken, so now again "you hope to be further enriched."†

Although the bill was thrown out, other proposals, of a like nature, were made during this

* Spelman, "Hist. of Sacrilege," p. 200, ed. 1853, gives an estimate of the Church lands in the reign of Edward I. It was then found that the whole land of England amounted to 67,000 knights' fees, of which 28,000 were in the hands of ecclesiastics.

† Cobbett's "Parl. Hist.," i., p. 296.

reign. In 1408 Henry, by the advice of his council, took for his household expenses all the revenues of alien priories and the income of all vacant bishoprics and abbeys.* "From the attempts made against them," writes the learned Tanner, "in the reigns of Henry IV. and Henry V., it is evident that the revenues of these houses had been long envied and thought too great, and perhaps that small part of the alien priories which had been given to the laity might make them long for more."†

The most serious attack against the monasteries, as far as proposals for plunder were concerned, was made in a bill introduced into parliament in the eleventh year of Henry IV., A.D. 1410, by John Oldcastle, better known as lord Cobham. "In this year also," the account of this wild and impossible scheme relates, "the king held his parliament at Westminster, during which the commons of this land put up a bill to the king to take the temporal land out of the spiritual men's hands and possession. The effect of which bill was that the temporalities disordinately wasted by many of the church might suffice to find the king, fifteen earls, 1,500 knights, 6,200 squires, and 100 houses of alms to the relief of poor people more than at that day were within England; and above all these foresaid charges the king might put yearly in his coffers £20,000, provided that every earl should have yearly 3,000 marks rent, every knight 100 marks, and every house of alms 100 marks, under the oversight of two true

* Rymer, viii., 510. † Notitia, Pref. xxii.

seculars to every house, and also with provision that every township should keep all poor people of their own inhabitants, who could not labour for their living, with the condition that if more fell in a town than that town could maintain, then the said almshouses were to relieve such townships; and for to bear these charges, they alleged by their said bill (that what was) in the possession of spiritual men amounted to 323,000 marks a year." There follows a list of various monasteries arranged in different dioceses, which it was proposed to dispossess. And "they alleged by the said bill that over and above the said sum of 320,000 marks, divers houses of religion in England possessed as many temporalities as might suffice to find yearly 40,000 priests and clerks, each priest to be allowed for his stipend seven marks a year."

To this extraordinary proposal "no answer was made," continues the writer, "but that the king of that matter would take deliberation and advice; and with that answer it ended, so that no further labour was made."* Stowe, the historian, relates that "when they went about to declare out of what places those great sums were to be levied, whereby the foresaid states should be endowed, they wanted in their account: wherefore the king commanded them that from henceforth they should not presume to move any such matter." †

* B. Mus. Lansdowne MSS., i., No. 26.

† Annales, ed. 1600, p. 549. Hollinshed Chronicles, ed. 1587, iii., p. 536.

In the second year of this same reign, A.D. 1400, action was taken by parliament against the practice of religious procuring from Rome bulls of exemption from the ordinary tithes. Originally, all religious had paid the tithe on the land granted to them, and although for a period there had been a general exemption granted by Paschal II. on lands farmed by the monks themselves, in the twelfth century Adrian IV. had limited the privilege to the Templars, Hospitallers, and Cistercians. The Council of Lateran, which in 1215 confirmed the exemption, confined it to lands managed by the religious and to such property as they possessed at the date of the Council. After the passing of the Mortmain laws, which were legitimate and politic restraints on perpetual possession of lands, many of the privileged orders obtained bulls granting exemption also to such lands as came into their possession after 1215, and were let to farmers. This method of procuring exemption from tithe, which had the force of law when obtained, was put an end to by the statute (2 Hen. IV., cap. 4), which subjected anyone procuring such bulls of exemption from tithe, to the penalty of *præmunire;* or forfeiture of goods to the king and imprisonment at his pleasure.*

* Selden, pp. 406-7. Lands exempted from tithe at the final dissolution of monasteries under Hen. VIII. are exempted at the present day by special provision (31 Hen. VIII., c. 13). Hence some holders of these lands pay tithes, others do not, while others again are tithe owners. *Cf.* Clarke's "Hist of Tithes," chap. viii.

In the reign of Henry V. the Lollard party in parliament again petitioned the king to confiscate monastic and church property. The proposal was rejected as subversive of all political morality and good faith. "When," says dean Hook, "we speak of the Lollards as martyrs we ought to regard them as a kind of political martyrs rather than religious; they made religion their plea in order to swell the numbers of the discontented, but their actions all tended to a revolution in the State as well as in the Church." . . . They "directed their first attacks upon the Church because the Church was the most vulnerable part of the Constitution. But the civilians —the citizen people—were quite as much alarmed at their proceedings as ecclesiastics. Both the Church and the State regarded the principles of the Lollards as subversive of all order in things *temporal as well as in things spiritual.*"*

The final end came to the system of alien priories in 1414, the second year of Henry the Fifth's reign. Having determined to tread in the footsteps of his ancestor, Edward III., he revived his claim to the French throne. To carry on the threatened war he asked, and obtained, large grants from parliament. On the old pretext that money was being constantly drained out of England by the foreign cells † he dissolved them all, to the number of 140. He vested their estates in the Crown, except some lands which had

* "Lives of Archbishops," iii., p. 72.

† "Parl. Rolls," Vol. iv., p. 22.

been granted to the college of Fotheringhay.* These possessions did not, however, remain long in the royal hands. Most of the lands, tenements, tithes, and other property which at this or previous times had been confiscated by king or parliament was bestowed upon other monasteries, colleges, or schools for ecclesiastical or educational purposes. Still, as in the case of the property of the Templars in the time of Edward II., the crown did not lose sight of what it considered its strict legal right in respect to these alienated estates. When it was thought probable that some action would be taken at the Council of Basle by the foreign monasteries to obtain the restitution of the dissolved alien priories, the English ambassadors were instructed to refuse to entertain the idea. They were to say "that those lands and tenements being given to religious places, conditionally only and for a certain determinate use, if the donees neglected to fulfil the condition, design, or use of the original grant, the donors or their representatives might, upon such default or neglect, resume and repossess the forfeited estates."† And in this case the fact that the foreign colonies had been

* Rymer, ix., 283. Harpsfield, "Hist. Angl. Sæc.," xiv., c. 8, says, "A synod of clergy, in the last year of Henry IV., petitioned the king that the laymen might not invade the possessions of the alien priories, but those foundations might be furnished and native English substituted in the room of (aliens). The king died shortly afterwards, but the request shows that at the time they were undissolved by law." See Fuller, "Hist.," iii., p. 352.

† Kennet, on "Impropriations," p. 114-115.

found during several reigns a peril to the state was considered ground sufficient to enforce forfeiture. Moreover, in the sixth article of the instructions, besides justifying the alienation on the ground of state policy, it is declared that Henry V., instead of appropriating the possessions, as according to law he might have done, had applied for and procured the permission of Pope Martin V. to convert the revenues into endowments for religious houses, colleges, and other pious purposes. The ambassadors are to say that this had in fact been done, and that liberal compensation beside had been made to the foreign churches and abbeys for the loss of their English property.*

Still, if such were law, the claims of justice had greater weight. The possessions taken from the foreign religious houses were, as a rule, devoted to other ecclesiastical purposes. Thus, to aid William of Wykeham's foundations, the priories of Takeley in Essex, and Hamell in Hants, were settled on New College at Oxford, and that of Andover, on Winchester School. In the same way archbishop Chicheley obtained from Henry VI., in 1437, the possessions of the priories of Rumney, Weedon Pinkney, St. Clare, Llangenith, and Abberbury for All Souls, at Oxford. About the same time also the king endowed his royal foundations of Eton and King's College, Cambridge, with lands of other dissolved monasteries

* *Vide* "Beckington Corresp.," "Rolls" series, Vol. i., Preface lxxxix.

in fulfilment of his father's design to appropriate them all to a noble college at Oxford.* The royal founder also granted to his colleges many of the sums of money which the houses in England had been accustomed to pay to the foreign monasteries by way of tribute, and also several portions of the alien priory lands, which, after their suppression, had already been partially granted away.†

Some of the priories, which had formerly been alien, were united to existing English monasteries. Thus Goldcliff, in Monmouthshire, was, on the permission asked by Henry Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, annexed to the abbey of Tewkesbury. A bull allowing this was obtained from pope Eugenius in 1452,‡ and by virtue of it the priory was transferred from the abbey of Bec, in Normandy, to which it had belonged since the reign of Henry I., and became a cell of the English abbey.§ The abbot of Tewkesbury got rid of the French monks, and one, Dom Hugh de Noramville, we know, became chaplain to a Somerset family, and subsequently obtained faculties from bishop Beckington.‖ The English monks, however, were not allowed to keep peaceful possession of their cell. After three years the neighbouring Welsh drove

* Tanner, xii., "Alien Priories." Append. ii., Nos. 1, 2.

† "Monasticon," Vol. vi., p. 1435.

‡ "Rot. Pat.," 22 Hen. VI., p. 2, m. 13.

§ "Monasticon," vi., p. 1021.

‖ "Reg. Beckington, Bath and Wells," f. 1936.

away the Tewkesbury prior and his brethren, and when, after a year, they were restored they only kept the cell for three years. After that time Henry VI. granted the property to Eton College, and although in 1461, when Edward IV. came to the throne, the cell was restored to the monks, six years later it was taken from them and again given to the college, which still possesses it.*

The foreign monasteries did not submit to be deprived of their English cells without an attempt to regain their jurisdiction over them. In 1458, for example, the abbey of Cluny sent over a deputation of three monks to Henry VI. The king was at St. Albans, and thither they proceeded and were well received by the abbot, to whom they had brought presents and special letters. Henry did not receive them personally, but at a conference with the royal advisers, held in the abbey church, they explained the object of their mission. It was to beg that the king would restore to their order the rents and revenues which had been paid to them for many centuries, but which for some years had been kept back from them. They also asked to be allowed free access to, and government of, the houses which belonged to them in England. This had of late been denied to them, and they complained that in one way or another the abbey of Cluny, had been deprived of the obedience of thirty-eight houses in the country. The deputation was told to return to

* "Monasticon," vi., p. 1021.

London and there await a reply, but it was finally obliged to return to France without satisfaction.*

Another example of the protests of foreign monasteries is that of St. Evroul, in 1416. The abbot and convent of this Benedictine abbey in Normandy wrote an earnest appeal to the Carthusians at Shene to restore the property with which Henry V. had endowed the Charterhouse, and which for many generations had belonged to them. In fact, as they said in their letter, their English possessions had been their chief source of income, as they received £2,000 a year from them. Owing to the frequent wars they had lately obtained nothing from this source, and as a consequence their numbers had diminished from 40 choir monks to less than 20. They appealed to justice and ecclesiastical tradition to persuade the Carthusians to give up the estates, protesting that no State policy or fear of foreign war could justly take them away. Finally, in their opinion, even if the pope had given leave for the transfer of their rights, it was a stretch of his authority, for "such power was given him to build, not to destroy."† Eleven years were consumed in the vain endeavour of the monks of St. Evroul to regain their English property. In 1427 they carried their case to Rome, but even then could not succeed in obtaining any satisfaction from the English king.‡

* "Whethamstede Chron.," Vol. ii., p. 317. "Rolls" series.

† Martene Thes. anecd., T. i., p. 1746.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 1773

Besides the case of the alien priories, the history of England previous to the reign of Henry VIII. furnishes few precedents of such suppressions. In every one of the few cases, however, exceptional reasons appear, justifying and explaining the extinction of these religious houses. Their possessions also were applied to other ecclesiastical and educational purposes. In 1459 bishop Waynfleet of Winchester founded Magdalen College at Oxford. The revenues proved altogether inadequate for the establishment, and "the college supplicated the founder to augment its income." They suggested that they might, perhaps, obtain the estates of the Augustinian priory of Selborne, "now become a deserted convent, without canons or prior."* The bishop appointed a commission to consider the matter, which found that the circumstances were as the college authorities had stated. On August 3, 1485, the estates were, therefore, incorporated with those of Magdalen college. The president and fellows upon this petitioned the pope for his sanction to the arrangement, and after considerable difficulties on the part of the Roman authorities, Innocent VIII. confirmed what had been done by his bull of July 8, 1486.†

A few years later, in 1494, pope Alexander VI., at the request of Henry VII., granted bulls for the

* White's "Selborne" Letter, 24.

† About the same time Waynfleet also obtained the Priory of Sele, in Sussex.

suppression of Mottisfont and Luffield, and the incorporation of their property with the chantry and hospital the king was establishing at Windsor.* The grounds upon which the action of the Pope was asked, were that practically these religious houses had ceased to exist. There were only three canons at Mottisfont, and a prior and two monks at Luffield. In each, by their foundation, there should have been a dozen. The fewness of their numbers rendered it impossible to perform the religious duties of their institutes. At Luffield, moreover, it was represented that through poverty the buildings were in ruins.†

A few years later John Alcock, bishop of Ely, obtained leave to suppress the convent of St. Rhadegund for educational purposes. It was, at the time, in a state of great poverty and ruin, owing, as the royal license stated, "to the dissolute lives of the nuns by reason of its proximity to Cambridge University."‡ The community had dwindled down to two; "one professed at another house, and the other a child." Hence, in 1496, with the leave of Henry VII., the bishop asked and obtained permission from pope Alexander VI. to convert the property into a college. This was to have been called the house of "St. Mary, St. John, and St. Rhadegund," but subsequently it became "Jesus" College.† In 1507, again, the abbey of St. Mary

* Rymer, xii., p. 562.
† Tanner, Pref. xxii.
‡ Rymer, xii., p. 652.
§ "Monasticon," iv., p. 215.

de Pratis, at Creyke, in Norfolk, was looked upon as dissolved because the abbot had died and there was no community to elect another.* By what was held to be the law, its possessions thus escheated to the Crown, and Henry VII., by letters patent, granted the abbey and its revenues to the countess of Richmond, with leave to assign them to Christ's College, Cambridge. This she did, having previously obtained the pope's license.

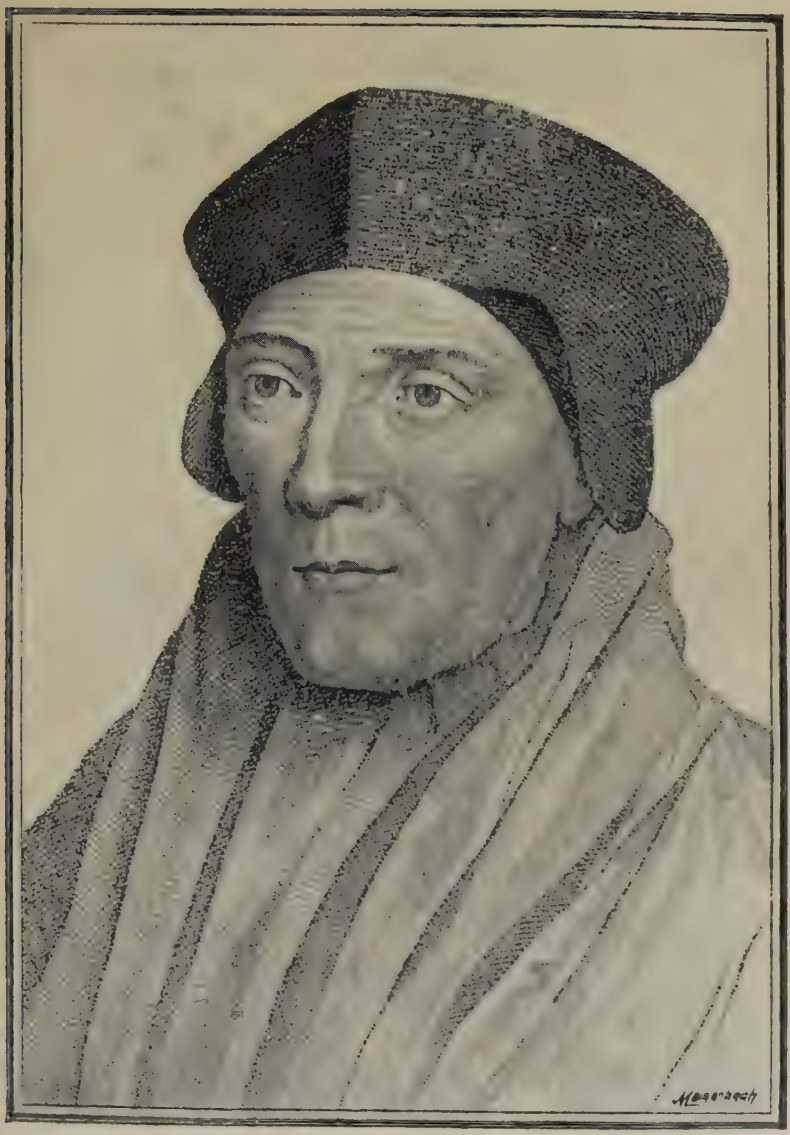
Two further precedents were furnished in the reign of Henry VIII. by the suppression of Bromehall, in the diocese of Salisbury, and Lillechurch, or Heigham, in that of Rochester. Both of these were dissolved by the advice and at the instance of the holy bishop Fisher, of Rochester. The King's zeal in the matter, however, suggests that both he and Wolsey, who at the time were contemplating extensive suppressions, were anxious to obtain a precedent backed by the authority and concurrence of so learned and holy a man. Both the cardinal and the king wrote their permission to the bishop of Salisbury to proceed against the nuns "for their enormities, misgovernances, and slanderous living." And in December, 1521, Henry VIII. thanked the bishop "for the excluding and putting out of the prioress and nuns . . . for such enormities as was by them used contrary to their religion, and for the bestowing of them in other virtuous houses of re-

* *Ibid.*, vi., p. 486. "Out of the copy of a bill in Chancery, exhibited on the part of Bishop Nix against Christ College."

ligion." He concluded by asking for the deeds and "evidences" of the convent now belonging to the crown, "by reason of the vacation of the said place, and as there be no nuns restant within the same."* On the 16th of January following all the deeds, to the number of 121, were delivered to the officer at St. John's College, Cambridge,† and by a singular inquisition taken on the 3rd March of the same year (1522), "it was found that Joan Rawlins, late prioress, having resigned, the only nuns belonging to the house had abandoned it," and that the possessions thus escheated to the crown. By letters patent, on October 21, 1522, these were granted to St. John's.‡ It is worthy of remark, that nowhere except in the letters of Henry and Wolsey, which contain vague suggestions of "slanderous living," is there any trace of charges against the nuns, whilst the zeal of the king and his minister is so remarkable that it suggests other motives.§

The case of Lillechurch or Heigham was different. The convent was situated in bishop Fisher's own diocese, and about four miles from Rochester. By its original foundation it had to support sixteen nuns, and in 1524 it had only three inmates. The last prioress had died in January, 1520, and no further election was made. At one time it had been a prosperous and flourishing community, and in 1320 bishop Haymo de Hethe, at one visit, professed no

* Fiddes' Collec., p. 99. † *Ibid.*, p. 293.
‡ "Monasticon," iv., p. 506. § Baker's "Hist. of St. John's," p. 91.



Bishop Fisher.
(After Hollein.)

fewer than eight novices.* At the time of bishop Fisher's proceedings, which were very regular, the convent bore a bad character and one at least of the nuns had been accused of serious immorality ten years before. No charge of later date was apparently brought against any of the three nuns, and, as is remarked in the "Monasticon," "it seems to be probable that the fewness of the numbers had as much to do with the dissolution as the life."† Be this as it may, in the proceedings against the nuns, and before the sentence of the bishop, or resignation of the sisters, the king's grant of the possessions to St. John's College was recited‡ and at the close of the inquiry the authorities were authorized to take possession. By the second statutes of the college, provision is made for prayers for the souls of the benefactors of Bromehall and Heigham.

In connection with this last suppression, one point is of interest. A bull was obtained from Clement VII. assenting to the dissolution "for certain just and legitimate reasons." Baker, however, has preserved§ the transcript of an earlier bull, apparently intended for the pope's signature, but never executed. It had been prepared in England, or by the English agents abroad. "It is worthy of remark," says the "Monasticon," "that the unexecuted bull is written

* Wharton's "Angl. Sac.," i., p. 361.
† "Monasticon," iv., p. 378.
‡ Note *ibid.* from Baker.
§ Baker's "Hist. of St. John's," p. 91.

in a form which indicates that the king was paving his way to the spoil of the religious houses." For "our beloved son in Christ, Henry now king of England," it runs, "may take possession of all moveables and immoveables and rights of all and every monastery or other religious place founded by him and his predecessors, which for any reason or by any means is left or deserted, by virtue of his own authority, and without leave, asking, or consent of anyone, and dispose of them in the same way as of other royal property at his good pleasure." These ample powers, however, were never granted. Wolsey had consequently to rely upon other methods of extorting unwilling permission from the Pope, when his schemes were matured.

CHAPTER III.

CARDINAL WOLSEY AND THE MONASTERIES.

ENGLAND, during some fourteen years of the reign of Henry VIII., was ruled by the counsels of Wolsey. On the king's accession, in 1509, the future lord cardinal of York had already made his way to the dignity of dean of Lincoln. Six years later pope Leo X. yielded to the earnest demands of the English king and the polite but persistent pressure of Wolsey's agents in Rome, and created him cardinal. He had already become archbishop of York, and had gained an ever increasing influence over the mind of his royal master. On December 24, 1515, one year later, he took the oaths of office as a Chancellor of England, in succession to the saintly and venerable Warham. He then appeared to have reached the summit of a subject's lawful ambition.

As the highest judicial officer of the realm—the "keeper of the King's conscience"—Wolsey's power in matters temporal was then practically unlimited. "He is in very great repute," writes a foreign ambassador in England, "seven times more so than if he

were pope. He is the person who rules both the king and the entire kingdom. On my (the ambassador's) first arrival in England he used to say 'His Majesty will do so and so.' Subsequently, by degrees, he went on forgetting himself, and commenced saying, '*We* shall do so and so.' At present he has reached such a pitch that he says, '*I* shall do so and so.'"

In addition to this almost regal authority in temporal matters the Cardinal desired great and exceptional powers in ecclesiastical concerns. For a while his appointment to a place in the august college of cardinals seemed doubtful. He consequently directed the English agent in Rome to hint that the Pope's hesitation was damaging to papal influence over Henry, and that refusal would be really dangerous. "If the king forsakes the pope," he added, "he will be in greater danger on this day two years than ever was pope Julius."* A few days later he again wrote to Silvester de Gigliis, the bishop of Worcester and the king's ambassador to the pope. In this dispatch he enclosed a communication, which was not to be handed to the pope till his nomination as cardinal was secure. The note thus sent made a further demand on the Holy See; it was that the Holy Father should appoint him Legate as well as create him Cardinal. Should this demand be refused the agent's instructions were to press for special faculties empowering Wolsey to visit all

* Calendar, ii., No. 763.

monasteries in England; powers which were to apply even to such as were by law exempt from all except papal authority. If this last request were skilfully put, Wolsey considered that the pope could not refuse it. No pope, he added, ever had a better friend than Henry "if he comply with his desires." The letter concluded by saying that the Cardinal was sending his agent 10,000 ducats *propter liberalia*, and with promises of great generosity to whomsoever brought him the cardinal's hat.* Leo X., however, was not to be coerced. He refused either to appoint the newly-created cardinal his legate in England, or to bestow upon him the extensive spiritual jurisdiction he desired.†

Two years later, in March, 1518, the subject of the coveted legateship was revived. The king's secretary, Pace, informed Wolsey that his master had received a communication from the pope. To ask aid against the Turk four legates had been appointed to the European powers, and cardinal Campeggio was accredited for that purpose to England. To this communication no reply was given for a long time. The English agent wrote to say that the pope was annoyed and astonished, and asked him "ten times a day" when he might expect an answer to his letters. At length Wolsey, after consultation with Henry, wrote to de Gigliis in an imperious tone. It was not customary in England, he said, to admit any foreign cardinal to exercise legatine

* Calendar, ii., No. 780, Aug. 1. † Calendar, ii., Nos. 967-8.

powers in the country; still the king was willing, under two conditions, to receive Campeggio as papal envoy. Of these two conditions the first was that all the ordinary faculties exercised by papal Legates *de jure* should, in this case, be suspended and that Campeggio should be confined to the special purpose for which he had been appointed. The second condition, coming from Wolsey himself, is even more astonishing. It was simply that the pope should associate him with Campeggio in the business and should bestow upon him equal legatine faculties. The dispatch then proceeded to state that unless these conditions were complied with "the King will in no wise allow Campeggio to enter England."*

Leo X. surrendered to the undisguised threats of Henry and Wolsey. On May 17, 1518, the latter was nominated legate with Campeggio, who had been previously appointed. In a very short time Wolsey contrived to assume the first place, leaving the subordinate one to the Italian cardinal.† The latter arrived in England only after many delays purposely interposed by the king and his minister. He was at once made to feel his dependent position, for Henry and the English cardinal kept the real business in their own hands and did not conceal their desire to get rid of the unwelcome foreign visitor.

Wolsey's diplomacy or threats, probably both,

* Calendar, ii., No. 4073. † Calendar, ii., No. 4179.

scored another triumph. He obtained not only the office of legate, but also the exceptional powers of visitation, which he had previously asked for and which had been refused. On August 27, 1518, Silvester de Gigliis wrote from Rome that he had been industrious in obtaining from the pope the deprivation of cardinal Hadrian de Castello from the see of Bath and Wells, and had secured the custody of the diocese for his master. In fact, until this was secured, at the the agent's suggestion, Campeggio had not been allowed to cross into England. The deprivation appears to have been obtained on account of the Pope's desire for the success of his legate's mission. De Gigliis also informed Wolsey that he had secured for him a bull for the visitation of monasteries in the same tenor "as that obtained by the bishop of Luxemburg for France." He added that he had often been struck with the necessity of reforming the monasteries and especially the convents of women; but he thought that the Cardinal "would find those of his own diocese (Worcester) complain."*

Never before in England, or probably in Christendom, had similar powers been vested in any single individual. The high office of Chancellor and the dominant influence Wolsey possessed over his royal master gave him the control of all secular authority. His legatine faculties, increased by the additional powers of visitation he had extorted from the Pope,

* Calendar, ii., No. 4399.

made him no less supreme in matters ecclesiastical. In the hand of one man were grasped the two swords of Church and State. One mind directed the policy of secular and ecclesiastical administration in England. Had that man been a saint the danger of such a combination would have been considerable. But when it was a worldly and ambitious man like Wolsey it was fatal. In him the vast authority already obtained only sharpened an unlimited yearning for power. For the first time the English people experienced supreme secular and spiritual authority exercised by one individual. It was an unfortunate precedent. In the minds of the people at large it made little difference that the person was an ecclesiastic. Not discriminating, they were taught to regard it only as a slight change, when a few years later, Henry assumed the spiritual headship to himself.

No sooner had Wolsey obtained the powers of visitation so long sought than he proceeded to put them in force. On March 19th, 1519, he issued *statuta* to be observed by the order of Canons Regular of St. Augustin, which were to remain in force till the feast of Holy Trinity, 1521.* The ordinances thus enacted are valuable evidence as to the state of the great Augustinian order at that time in England. They point to a severity of discipline and a mortified mode of life altogether incompatible with that general laxity since attri-

* Wilkins' "Concilia," iii., p. 613.

Canon Regular of St. Augustine.

buted to them in common with the other great bodies of regular clergy. The mere enactments of the primary principles of the monastic life or declarations of the unlawfulness of certain evil customs must never be considered in such injunctions as proof of the existence of evil. As well might the vigorous denunciations of sin from the pulpit, or the constant reassertion of the Ten Commandments, be held as evidence that God's law was uniformly violated by those to whom such words are addressed. The tendency of human nature is ever to fall away from any standard of excellence. Hence the necessity of unwearied iteration in setting out the ideal to be aimed at, and this is sufficient to explain why constitutions and statutes of religious orders inveigh against abuses.

The special statutes of cardinal Wolsey for the Augustinian canons are eighteen in number. They provide for the assembly of a General Chapter every three years and for various matters connected with poverty, obedience and the general discipline of the cloister. The abbots are charged to diligently watch over their subjects, to be constantly at their posts among their community, to correct by daily chapters whatever there may be amiss, and to provide in each monastery "a prison where, if it shall be necessary, the more notable and graver offences may be punished."

Not the least interesting of these statutes is that appertaining to the choral duties. To these the

Augustinians, in common with other religious, were bound. Their *Divine office* was to be said, neither too fast nor too slowly, with due pronunciation of the words and the accustomed pause in the middle of each verse of the Psalms. It was enjoined as the chief duty of each canon that he should be present at the choral services, and especially at matins and the principal mass. "And," the document proceeds, "with all ecclesiastics, and especially religious, that method of singing is deservedly approved, which is not intended to gratify the ears of those present by the levity of its rhythm, nor to court the approval of worldlings by the multiplicity of its notes. But that, which in plain chant (*planus cantus*) raises the minds of the singers and the hearts of the hearers to heavenly things." Hence the cardinal strictly requires its use and forbids that of "pricksong." He further orders that no laymen or boys are to be allowed to join in the canonical singing. They may, however, do so in any of the numerous other masses "daily sung in most religious houses." On Sundays and feast-days the canons, if they can do it of themselves, may use some simple melodies at mass and vespers, provided that all the words are sung and the music expresses the sense. Lastly, out of compassion for the great labour undergone by the religious in the masses, "of which three and more are sometimes sung" in a day, besides the canonical hours, "so that the voices of the canons are worn out, and

their souls, through fatigue, unable to attend to the service of God," the cardinal encouraged the use of the organ as a support to the voice, even if it were necessary to employ a secular priest or a layman to play it.*

It is impossible not to approve the spirit which dictated constitutions such as these. And it would have been well had Wolsey continued in the same way the work he thus begun, and by watchful care endeavoured to recall the religious orders to greater fervour. Unfortunately his ambitious schemes soon involved him in a conflict with them. Those who might tolerate criticism and even welcome wholesome correction could hardly be expected to look with approval, or even indifference, on total extinction. And this, more especially, when the dissolution of their houses was desired merely to sweep the riches of their poverty into a common fund vast enough to meet the call of the Cardinal's necessities. Opposition to Wolsey's scheme might be expected as the natural outcome of resentment at interference; still, on the whole, the State papers of this time reveal very little springing from this cause. The cardinal of York was, it is true, hated and feared; but not more by the religious than by secular priests and laymen. Dislike and distrust is perhaps inseparable from power such as he exercised. It must, however, be confessed that he did much to create, and little or nothing to disarm suspicion of his

* "Statuta," No. ix.

ends and means. Previously to 1524, however, Wolsey does not appear to have encountered much hostility from the regulars of England, except from such as were connected, like the friars, with other branches of their order in foreign countries, or were under the rule of a foreign general. The Franciscan Friars of Observance were, perhaps, the most difficult to deal with, owing to their general good repute and the great influence possessed by them in Rome.

At the close of 1523 the Cardinal had determined to rival other great churchmen as a founder of an Oxford college. The example of Waynfleet and Wykeham, and the more recent establishment at Cambridge, through the exertions of the venerable bishop Fisher, impelled him to add the glory of "founder" to the titles he already possessed. At this time he was engaged on the erection of magnificent palaces and he had as much difficulty in supplying funds for these ambitious undertakings as in keeping his master, the king, from constant beggary. His connection with Magdalen College may have suggested the plan of acquiring the necessary money for his new undertaking by the dissolution of monasteries. As bursar, he would doubtless have had access to the muniments; and he would have learnt from them that fifty years before bishop Waynfleet, of Winchester, had supplemented the revenues of his new foundation by the estates of the priory of Selborne, to which arrangement the Pope, after some difficulty, had consented.

The same had been done in other well-known instances and, only a year or two before, bishop Fisher had been encouraged to help out the new foundation of St. John's, Cambridge, by the same policy. It has, indeed, been suggested that there was a diplomatic purpose on Wolsey's part in the encouragement he gave the bishop of Rochester in this matter.

Pressure was put upon pope Clement VII. to grant leave for the dissolution of certain religious houses to enable Wolsey to carry out his project. To understand this it is necessary to recall something of the Cardinal's methods in dealing with the Holy See. It has already been seen that he obtained the red hat, the high office of legate, and the further powers of visitation, by threats. This policy he persevered in during the whole of his career. On December 2nd, 1521, pope Leo, in the hour of his signal success at Milan, and the almost unexpected dissipation of "the grisliest nightmare of the Church's dream,"* died at Rome. The attention of all the Powers was concentrated on the choice of a successor. "In most cases," wrote the Imperial ambassador to his master, "two or three cardinals endeavour to obtain the election; now all aspire to it."† Wolsey was amongst the number. He had already made preparations for the event, and had canvassed even in Leo's lifetime. At a meeting in Bruges, Charles V. had pledged his

* Calendar, ii., No. 1824. † *Ibid.*, iii., Preface, p. 187.

word that he would aid him in his ambition; and on the first notice of the pope's death the Emperor instructed his ambassador to see "Mons. the Legate . . . to let us know his wishes, and what are his inclinations that way. We will exert ourselves very willingly in his behalf and spare no pains."* In reply to this communication, the ambassador wrote that Henry was resolved on the election of Wolsey. Further, that he was sending Richard Pace, his own secretary, "as if he sent his very heart," in order "to induce and persuade the cardinals to give their votes to the Cardinal of York." As for Wolsey himself, he openly declared, according to the same authority, that he would not accept the election except at the nomination of the king and the emperor. "And so," the ambassador concludes, "your Majesty, like father and son, shall dispose of that See, its authority and power, as if they were your own, and give laws to the rest of the world."†

Subsequently, the same writer says that he has seen Wolsey, who told him of the instructions given to Henry's agent, Richard Pace. "One thing," he added, "at which I was greatly astonished, and, however strange it may seem, I will repeat to your majesty. He said that to secure the election which he desired, for no earthly reason except for the king's exaltation and yours, it would be very important that your majesty's army now in Italy

* Calendar, iii., No. 1876. † *Ibid.*, No. 1884.

should advance to Rome. Then if, after liberal monition and offers, the cardinals continued refractory they should be *compelled to elect him by force.*" Wolsey, he also declared, even told him that if 100,000 ducats were required to accomplish the object "they would be forthcoming."* Wolsey, in his schemes, seems altogether to have forgottten the sacred character of his office. In his desire to coerce, bribe, or intimidate the electing cardinals into making choice of himself, he overlooked the fact that he was with them the guardian of the Church's honour and that he professed to believe in the protecting direction of God's providence over the conclave. Wolsey's endeavours to obtain the Popedom failed. But his demeanour to the successors of Leo X. remained as haughty and exacting as ever.

To the other emoluments, ecclesiastical and lay, which Wolsey possessed, and in addition to the pensions he received from foreign countries, he added in 1521 the revenues of the abbatial office of St. Albans. He was away from England when abbot Ramridge died in November. On the 12th of that month, the monks appeared before the king at Windsor to request permission to proceed to the election of a successor. Henry made them a speech, about which, on account of "its princely and godly motion," Secretary Pace wrote to Wolsey the following day. Whilst actually engaged on this letter a communication was brought to him from the

* *Ibid.*, No. 1892.

Cardinal "touching the monastery of St. Albans." "And after I had perused," writes Pace, "and diligently debated with myself the contents of the same, I went straight to the king's grace, with your grace's letters, to him directed, in the same matter. And I found him ready to go out a shooting; and yet, that notwithstanding, his grace happily commanded me to go down with him by his secret way into the park; whereby I had as good commodity as I could desire to advance your grace's petition as much as the case required. And the king read your grace's letters himself, and made me privy to the contents of the same. And the few words his Highness spoke to me in this cause were these: 'By God! my lord cardinal hath sustained many charges in this his voyage and expended £10,000,' which I did affirm and show his grace of good congruence, he oweth you some recompence. Whereunto his grace answered 'that he would rather give unto your grace the abbey of St. Albans than to any monk.'"* Thus at the Cardinal's petition the revenues of the premier abbey were given in reward for secular services.

At the commencement of the year 1524 Clerk, the Cardinal's agent in Rome, wrote that he was "almost at a point with the Pope about Wolsey's matters." Clement VII. was "contented to confirm the legateship," he said, "with all faculties for life, which was never heard before." Further, that "the ordering of Frideswide's in Oxford was also at

* Calendar, iii., No. 1759.

Wolsey's pleasure." * The pope was in a miserable plight at this time. He would have given way, apparently, in anything that was not vital to the interests and honour of the Holy See. Still, he was not so ready to acquiesce as Wolsey wished. Towards the end of February, therefore, the English cardinal wrote that he was not overpleased at the difficulties that had been raised about the extended faculties of his legateship. The pope's predecessors, he said, had given him as much, "and with all its faculties, whatever people may report, it will not be worth 1,000 ducats a year" to him. He hence desired secretary Pace to urge the Holy Father to amplify "as of himself." †

Later on the agents report further attempts to obtain extended powers from Clement VII. The pope appeared willing, but said, "what a business other men made" about it. They conclude their communication by a significant hint to their master. It would be well, they think, for him to secure a pension out of the revenues of the bishopric of Worcester for one of the pope's officers who has been "good to him." ‡ By this time, however, Wolsey had obtained the bull, which enabled him to dissolve the monastery of St. Frideswide at Oxford and apply its property to the foundation of his college. § The document had been sent off from

* Calendar, iv., No. 15. Jan. 9, 1524.
† *Ibid.*, No. 126. Feb. 28. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 252.
§ The King's "inspeximus" is dated May 10, and the Bull April 3, 1524.

Rome by the end of April. It had been procured at the earnest request of the cardinal's agents, yet they made it appear to be the result of Clement's own desire. It was not exactly such a faculty as they wished to obtain. Still, it contained, as they said, "the clause *motus proprii*," and they trusted that it might be made more advantageous. In fact, Clerk altered the document in this sense without asking the pope; but at the last moment he found that the enlarged faculties would not be granted. The agent again concluded his communication by saying that Ghiberto, one of the Pope's officials, "openly will not be known," but he has done his best, and he thinks that he is waiting to see, whether he gets the pension from the See of Worcester. This Clerk advises Wolsey not to refuse, "as he may be useful."

For the next few months great pressure was put upon the Holy Father to grant permission for further suppressions in order to help out the cardinal's design at Oxford. The pope appeared favourable, but cardinal *Sanctorum Quatuor* was "untreatable." He apparently influenced Clement VII. against the scheme. In August, 1524, Clerk wrote that the Holy Father made hardly any objection to his demands for Wolsey, "except the extinction of the monasteries and the collectorship."* They had been told in Rome (as the bull subsequently obtained asserts) that the need for

* Calendar, iv., Nos. 511, 568.

increased facilities of study in England was at this time most pressing, and that the Oxford university "seemed likely to come to an end by reason of its slender revenues."* Further, that the position of St. Frideswide's in the city of Oxford was admirably adapted for the purpose of a college, and that, owing to the objection of the English people to allowing land to be held for such purposes, it was impossible to buy or procure it. Lastly, they were told that there were many religious houses in England where the numbers had diminished to five or six, and where, on this account, the divine service could not be fittingly carried out.

Urged by these motives, the pope at first granted the cardinal of York the amplified faculties for visitation so long and diligently sought. Subsequently he consented to another bull for increasing the revenues of the Oxford college by further suppressions. He warned Wolsey's agent, however, "for God's sake to use mercy with those friars," as to the matter of visitation, adding, according to Clerk (what sounds much more like the agent's sentiment than the pope's) "that they were desperate beasts, past shame, that can lose nothing by clamour."† The bull allowing Wolsey to suppress monasteries to the value of 3,000 ducats a year for the purpose

* Rymer, xiv., p. 23: "*Et quod Universitas studii generalis Oxoniensis ob penuriam reddituum propemodum extinctum iri videbatur.*"

† Calendar, iv., No. 610. The bull granting the additional faculties of visitation is in Rymer, xiv., p. 18.

of adding to the funds of his college, left Rome on September 12th, 1524.* It provided that the king and the various founders should give their sanction, and that the religious persons should go to other monasteries.†

Power having been thus obtained from Rome, the cardinal commenced early in the following year, 1525, to possess himself of the revenues of various monasteries, besides those of St. Frideswide's, in Oxford. The papal bull was ratified by the king on March 15th. The various parish churches, formerly belonging to the suppressed religious houses, were appropriated by letters patent to the new foundation.‡ But both the time and the agents Wolsey employed, however, to effect the dissolutions conduced to render the matter unpopular. Just at this period Henry was endeavouring to raise a large loan from his people "against the time the king should pass the sea." The amount asked was no less than "the sixth part of every man's substance," and that it "should without delay be paid in money or plate to the king for the furniture of his war." § Warham warned Wolsey in the spring of the year how unpopular this "amicable grant" was in Kent.‖ The work of suppression which engaged Wolsey at this time was disliked by both clergy and laity.

* Calendar, iv., No. 652.

† Rymer, xiv., p. 23.

‡ Rot. Pat., 18 Hen. VIII., p. 1., mm. 21, 22.

§ Hall, "Union of the Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke," ed. 1548, fol. 138d.

‖ Ellis, "Orig. Lett.," 1st Series, iii., p. 367.

In the July of 1525 archbishop Warham again wrote to the cardinal about the difficulties his policy was creating in the southern parts of England. The inhabitants of Tunbridge strongly objected to the dissolution of a monastery of Austin canons from which they had derived many advantages. Warham was commissioned to go there and endeavour to persuade them that it was much better to have "forty children of that country educated and after sent to Oxford" than to have six or seven canons living amongst them; but the people did not think so. After discussing the matter for five or six days they again met Warham, and gave him a list of those who desired the continuance of their ancient priory. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood no less than of the town "would rather have the said place not suppressed," wrote the archbishop, "if it might stand with the king's pleasure." The murmurs about the matter were very difficult to repress, and this he told Wolsey, who had a "suspicion that the bruit" was against himself.*

In the neighbouring county of Sussex the agitation against Wolsey's dissolution of monasteries

* Calendar, iii., 1470-1. Warham to Wolsey, July 2nd and 3rd, 1525. Hall, *ut sup.*, fol. 137, gives the following account of these suppressions:—The Cardinal "suddenly entered by his commissioners into the said houses and put out the religious and took all their goods, moveables, and scarcely gave to the poor wretches anything except it were to the heads of the house. And then he caused the escheator to sit and find the houses void, as relinquished, and found the king founder where other men were founders, and with these lands withall he endowed his colleges."

was more serious and led to a riot. Beigham abbey, "the which was very commodious to the country,"* was a monastery of Premonstratensians, and although Wolsey had commissioned the bishop of Chichester to visit and inquire into certain alleged scandals there,† the religious evidently maintained a hold on the affections of their neighbours. On the cardinal's proceeding to dissolve the house, under the powers of pope Clement's bull, the people assembled in "a riotous company disguised and unknown, with painted faces" and masked. They turned out the agents engaged on the suppression and reinstated the canons. Before separating they begged the religious, if they were again molested, to ring their bell, and they pledged themselves to come in force to their assistance.‡

The work of dissolution was certainly unpopular. Rumour, apparently, attributed to the cardinal even larger schemes of confiscation than were at the time contemplated. No sooner was the bull of Clement VII. put into force than petitions against the exercise of Wolsey's legatine powers were presented to the pope, especially by the Grey friars and the Franciscan observants. The latter were very powerful in Rome, and, as the cardinal's agent wrote, the pope may, perhaps, "give them some brief," but not one derogatory to Wolsey's honour.§ The cardinal of York himself had also representations made to

* Hall, *ibid.*, fol. 143. † Calendar, iii., 1252.
‡ Hall, *ut sup.* Ellis, "Orig. Lett.," 2nd Ser., iii., p. 57.
§ Calendar, iii., No. 1521.

him against the work in which he was engaged. The duke of Suffolk, for example, wrote to him in favour of the priory of Conished, in Lancashire, which by common report had been doomed to extinction. The monastery, he said, was "a great help to the people," and "the prior of good and virtuous disposition." *

Complaints were also carried to the king of the harsh and unjust way in which Wolsey's agents, Dr. Allen and Thomas Crumwell, carried out the suppressions and the visitations of the religious houses upon which they were then engaged. Early in 1525 the cardinal had been informed by Sir Thomas More that complaints had been made to Henry, "touching certain misorders supposed to be used by Dr. Allen and other my officers in the suppression of certain exile and small monasteries wherein neither God is served nor religion kept. These, with your gracious aid and assistance, converting the same to a far better use, I purpose," writes Wolsey to the king, "to annex unto your intended college of Oxford." He further assures Henry that he can disprove any such reports, saying "I have not meant, intended, or gone about, nor also have willed mine officers to do anything concerning the said suppressions, but under such form and manner as is, and hath largely been, to the full satisfaction, recompense, and joyous contentation of any person, which hath had, or could pretend to have, right or interest in the same."†

* Calendar, iii., No. 1253. † State Papers, i., p. 154.

Whatever may have been Wolsey's belief, at the time, in the integrity of his agents there is little doubt that the reports about them were well founded. Subsequently, indeed, the cardinal practically admitted the truth of the charges suggested against those he employed in dealing with the religious. Fiddes in the "Life of Wolsey" says:—"The revenues of the cardinal, from the privileges of his visitatorial power, of making abbots, of proving wills, granting faculties, licenses, and dispensations from his pensions and preferments, and other visible advantages were thought by this time to be equal to the revenues of the crown. But in the methods of enriching him under the first article no one contributed so much as his chaplain, John Allen, LL.D., who, accompanied with a great train, and riding in a kind of perpetual progress from one religious house to another, is said to have drawn very large sums for his master's service from them."*

This Dr. Allen was, apparently, the object of great dread and intense dislike. He was an astute, hard man, and, like his fellow, Crumwell, had evidently been trained up in business habits to the detriment of his humanity or even honesty. He was afterwards made archbishop of Dublin, "where his imperiousness and rapacity brought him to a violent end."† At a somewhat later date, when, as minister to the greed of Henry, Crumwell was at work upon

* Fiddes' "Wolsey," p. 351. Hall, *ut sup.*, fol. 143.

† Brewer's "Henry VIII.," Vol. ii., p. 270.

the wholesale suppression of monasteries, the memory of Dr. Allen's behaviour was still fresh in the minds of the religious. John Ap. Rice, one of the visitors, writing of his fellow, Legh, says that the monks and nuns "were never so afraid of Dr. Allen as they be of him, he useth such rough fashion with them."* A discontented monk of Worcester also complains in 1535 that some ten years before, the doctor had accepted a bribe of 20 angels and a white palfrey from his prior.†

The courtesy and consideration, which the monks were likely to receive at the hands of Crumwell, may be best understood by his subsequent dealings with them. "Of Crumwell," writes Mr. Brewer, "it is enough to say that even at this early period of his career his accessibility to bribes and presents in the disposal of monastic leases was notorious." ‡ For some years before the cardinal's fall, report had spoken badly of Thomas Crumwell. "Loud outcries

* R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xxxv., No. 38.

† Calendar, ix., No. 52. The account which Hall, *ut sup.*, fol. 143, gives of Dr. Allen, is worth quoting. "The Cardinal," he says, "about this season by his power legatine sent a chaplain of his called John Allen, a man of more learning than virtue or good conscience, to visit all places religious. This priest rode in his gown of velvet, with a great train, and was received into every religion, with procession as though the legate had been there. And (he) took such great sums for his visitation that the religious were sore grieved and murmured much against it, and especially for they were charged with great sums of money to the king. And now this sudden visitation or predation clean shaved them."

‡ "Henry VIII.," ii., p. 270.

reached the king's ears of the exactions and peculations of Wolsey's officers, in which the name of Crumwell was most frequently repeated, and more than once the king had to express his grave displeasure at the conduct of a man who soon after was destined to occupy the highest place in his favour." *

In 1527, when Wolsey was at Amiens and proposed to send Dr. Allen to England with a message to the king, Knight, who was afterwards bishop of Bath and Wells, wrote to warn the cardinal against his selection. "And, sir," he said, "in case Mr. Allen be not departed hitherwards on your message, or may be in time revoked, your grace might use better any about you for your message unto the king than him. I have heard the king and noblemen speak things incredible of the acts of Mr. Allen and Crumwell." †

In subsequent times the superiors of religious houses endeavoured to buy off the threatened dissolution by presents and bribes or by readily acceding to requests which were tantamount to demands. Under Wolsey they tried to purchase favour by offers of gifts to the cardinal's college. The bishop of Lincoln, who greatly aided the foundation in more ways than one, put great pressure on the abbot of Peterborough to resign, or to bestow the large sum of 2,000 marks on the undertaking. He tried much the same system of blackmail on the prior of Spalding. The prior, however, would not

* *Ibid.*, p. 394. † State Papers, i., p. 261.

resign, "though all legal means were tried." * There are also several indications of distinct bribes offered for various offices. One man will give 500 marks and other considerable presents to the college, if the cardinal will make him under-treasurer.† When the prior of St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, was sick of the plague and likely to die, the friends of "William Finch, cellarer of the same," offered Wolsey "£300 to your college at Oxford for your favour towards his preferment." ‡ Lastly, to allow him to illegally imprison some one who has offended him, Henry, earl of Northumberland, offers to give the cardinal "the chapel books of his late father," which he has been asked to bestow on the college. To induce him to make the bargain, the earl says he will let him have four antiphonals and graduals, "such as were not seen a great while," £200 in money, and a benefice of £100 for his college.§

At length, on the eve of the lord cardinal's fall, the king is more explicit as to the methods employed by Wolsey's agents and his own condemnation of them. The letters were called forth by a difference between Henry and his minister as to the appointment of an abbess to Wilton. The king had determined to favour the election, or what might be more truly called the appointment, of Dame Elinor Cary. She was supported by powerful friends, amongst whom was reckoned Anne Boleyn herself.

* Calendar, iv., Nos. 2378, 4708.
† *Ibid.*, No. 4452, also 4483.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 3334.
§ *Ibid.*, No. 4603.

The cardinal, probably with quite sufficient reason, approved of the choice of the former prioress, Dame Isabell Jordayn, and in distinct opposition to the royal wishes. Wolsey wrote to offer humble apologies, on being informed of Henry's displeasure, and, in accepting the explanation, the king wrote: "As touching the help of religious houses to the building of your colleges, I would it were more, so it were lawfully; for my intent is none but that it should appear so to all the world, and the occasion of all their mumbling might be secluded and put away. For surely there is great murmuring of it throughout all the realm, both good and bad. They say not that all that is illgotten is bestowed on the college, but that the college is the cloak for covering all mischiefs. This grieveth me, I assure you, to hear it spoken of him whom I so entirely love. Wherefore methought I could do no less than thus friendly to admonish you. One thing more I perceive by your letter, which a little, methinks, toucheth conscience, and that is that you have received money of the exempts for having their old visitors. Surely this can hardly be with good conscience. For if they were good why should you take money? and if they were ill it were a sinful act. Howbeit, your legateship herein might peradventure *apud homines* be a cloak, but not *apud Deum.*" *

* Lord Herbert, "Henry VIII.," p. 164. Fiddes' "Wolsey," p. 379. Fuller, "Church Hist.," iii., p. 357, ed. 1845, says:— "God's exemplary hand ought to be heeded in the signal fatality of

In his reply the cardinal thanks his master "for the great zeal that (he) had for the purity and cleanness of my poor conscience, coveting and desiring that nothing should be by me committed or done, by the colour of my intended college or otherwise, that should not stand with God's pleasure and good conscience, or that thereby any just occasion might be given to any person to speak or judge ill of my doings. And albeit, as is contained in my other letters, I have acknowledged to have received of divers, my old lovers and friends, and other exempt religious persons, right loving and favourable aids towards the edifying of my said college, yet your majesty may be well assured that the same extendeth not to such a sum as some men doth untruly bruit and report, or that any part thereof, to my knowledge, thought, or judgment hath been corruptly or contrary to law taken or given." He then declares that henceforth he will take nothing "from any religious person, being exempt or not exempt, so that thereby I trust, nor by any other

such as by the Cardinal were employed in this service. Five they were in number, two whereof challenging the field of each other, one was slain and the other hanged for it. A third throwing himself headlong into a well, perished wilfully. A fourth, formerly wealthy, grew so poor that he begged his bread. The fifth, Dr. Allen, one of especial note, afterwards archbishop of Dublin, was slain in Ireland. What became of the Cardinal himself is notoriously known, and as for his two colleges, that in Ipswich (the emblem of its builder, soon up soon down) presently vanished into private houses; whilst the other, Christchurch in Oxford, was fain to disclaim its founder."

thing hereafter unlawfully taken, your poor cardinal's conscience shall not be spotted, encumbered, or entangled." *

Notwithstanding Wolsey's excuses, Henry seems to have had just grounds for his suspicion that the cardinal had made use of his legatine authority to serve his own purposes. Popular report had spoken of immunities purchased by presents to the cardinal's colleges, which were adverse to the king's interests, and which ought not to have been granted. The archbishop of Canterbury complained that, in raising the loan known as the "amicable grant," he had no power at all over the religious houses in his district. "They must be left," he writes, "to your grace (Wolsey), and unless they contribute to the loan according to the value of their benefices the clergy will complain. Had the religious houses not been exempted, but appeared before me, the loan derived from my diocese would be much greater." † The king likewise complains with much bitterness that among the religious are found the most strenuous and successful opponents of this enforced benevolence. "These same religious houses," he writes to the cardinal, "would not grant to their sovereign in his necessity, not by a great deal so much as they have to you for the building of your college. These things bear shrewd appearance, for, except they were *accustomed to have some benefit,* they, and no other I ever heard

* State Papers, i., p. 317. † Calendar, iv., p. 2010.

of, have used to show that kindness, *tam enim est aliena ab eis ipsa humanitas.*" He concludes by urgently requiring Wolsey to look well into the conduct of those to whom he has entrusted this "meddling with religious houses."*

During the spring of 1527 the question of the divorce of Henry from Catherine began to be mooted in England. In the autumn the first communication on the subject between the king and the pope took place. When the royal agents arrived in Rome, on November 25th, they found Clement VII. a prisoner in the castle of St. Angelo, with some few cardinals. The city had been taken and sacked by the duke of Bourbon in the previous May. At this time Wolsey had conceived the desire to further emulate the example of bishop Wykeham and establish a school, which should feed his foundation at Oxford as that at Winchester had done New College. For this purpose further funds were imperatively necessary. The success of his previous scheme having been secured by the dissolution of various monasteries, the agents, who had gone to Rome on the divorce question, were instructed to seek additional powers in the same direction. The cardinal at this time appears to have hesitated at nothing to carry out his designs. In the summer of this year, 1527, he had been in France, where he made three treaties with the king. It was agreed that, during the captivity of the pope, no bull or

* Brewer's "Henry VIII.," ii., p. 283. Fiddes' Collect., p. 139.

brief should be received in either country; that, with the consent of Henry, the cardinal of York should have control of all ecclesiastical affairs in England, and that Francis I. should take the like power in his dominions. Wolsey also proposed to ask Clement VII. to make him his vicar-general, as long as he was a prisoner, and to entrust him with supreme authority. In fact, according to the tenor of the bull, written ready for the pope's seal and signature, the cardinal proposed to obtain power of dispensing even from the *divine law.**

What is more extraordinary still is, that Wolsey, before leaving France, acted as if he had obtained these full and unheard of powers. He even ordered the chancellor of France to assume the dignity and dress of cardinal, which Clement had promised but not bestowed. †

In December, 1527, the pope escaped from Rome to Orvieto, and thither Gardiner and Foxe, Wolsey's agents, followed him. The Holy Father was powerless, and at the mercy of any who chose to exert pressure upon him. On March 23rd, 1528, Foxe wrote describing the miserable state in which they had found the pope on their arrival at Orvieto. He had taken up his quarters in the bishop's ruined palace. Three small chambers, "all naked and unhanged," with the ceiling fallen, and about thirty

* Pocock, Records, i., p. 19: "*Etiamsi ad divinæ legis relaxationem.*" See Lewis' Trans. of Sanders, Introd., p. liii., &c.

† Lewis, Introd., lv. Pocock, Records, ii., p. 88.

persons of the "riff-raff" standing about "for a garnishment," led to the pope's private apartment. The furniture of this, "bed and all," was not worth "twenty nobles." *

For some weeks the agents were engaged in trying to force from the defenceless pope a decision on the divorce question. Gardiner had even threatened to settle the matter in England independently of Clement, and his insolence had astonished the cardinals who were present.† Failing to obtain what he desired, the agent endeavoured to purchase compliance by promises "for the recovery of the See Apostolic with maintenance of the same." Finally, on April 4th, he and his fellow-priests "returned unto the pope's holiness, and spake roundly unto him . . . as our instructions purporteth, and to that point that the king's highness would do it without him."‡ In the midst of this perplexity and difficulty a further demand was made on Wolsey's behalf. Powers were asked to suppress the priory of St. Peter's, Ipswich and other monasteries to obtain funds for the foundation of a college at Ipswich. The pope gave way; nor could he well have refused any demand which conscience would have enabled him to grant. In the middle of May, 1528, the necessary bulls were dispatched to Wolsey.

Gardiner appears to have acted as unscrupulously

* Calendar, iv., No. 4090. † Lewis, Introd., lxxv.
‡ Calendar, iv., No. 4167.

in this matter as in the divorce question. The pope, on the first suggestion of further suppressions, had asked from the agents particulars about the cardinal's colleges. He was pleased with the account given him, and told the cardinals de Monte and Sanctorum Quatuor "what a good" work it was. "In particular it rejoiced the pope," writes Strype, "when they told him that Wolsey had taken order that, in letting the farms belonging to his college, no man should have them but such as would dwell upon them and maintain hospitality . . and he (the pope) justified and maintained the commutation and alteration of those religious places, whereof only did arise the scandal of religion as he spoke. For the cardinal, for the endowing of his college, had lately obtained of the pope a bull for the dissolving of divers monasteries wherein much vice and wickedness was harboured, *as he informed the pope, to incline him thereby the easier to grant his request.*"*

In this way the convent of Pre, near St. Albans, was dissolved, and united to that great abbey. The pope was told that the nuns did not keep a good rule of life, and that religious discipline was much relaxed. The revenues, therefore, were transferred to St. Alban's abbey in order that an increased number of monks might be supported for the better celebration of the divine office.† It may be, that

* Strype. "Eccl. Mems.," i., p. 168. Calendar, iv., No. 4120.

† Rymer, xiv., p. 240.

the nuns of Pre merited the bad character for laxity of life given to them in the papal bull. In view, however, of Wolsey's motive in giving a bad character to monasteries whose possessions he desired, the mere fact of the statement by the pope is not proof positive. Neither does the fact that the convent was united to the abbey of St. Albans show that Wolsey had no motive in the suppression. To this arrangement the cardinal really objected, and authorized his agent to obtain another bull from Clement uniting Pre to Cardinal college, Oxford. At the same time he wished that the impropriation of a living, also obtained for St. Albans, should be changed to the college at Ipswich.*

In the various suppressions which followed complaints were again made of the high-handed action of Wolsey's servants. The abbot of Beaulieu, who was also bishop of Bangor, wrote to the cardinal of the unjust seizure of certain lands in the parish of St. Keverans, Cornwall, belonging to his abbey. He represented that Beaulieu had possessed the property for 400 years and that now two servants had taken it. And one "gentleman hath written to me," he said, "that the benefice there, which is impropriated to Beaulieu, he mindeth to give to the finding of scholars, and feigneth that some time there was a cell of monks there."†

The abbot of York, also, complains of Wolsey's

* Calendar, iv., No. 5714.

† Ellis, "Orig. Lett.," iii. Ser. 2, p. 60.

seizure of Romburgh priory, in Suffolk, which was a cell of St. Mary's abbey. He says, that on the 11th of September, 1528, certain officers of the cardinal came to the priory, read the authority of the pope and king, "entered into the same priory, and that done took away as well the goods moveable of the said priory . . and also certain muniments, evidences, and specialities touching and appertaining unto our monastery, which we had lately sent unto our said prior and brethren there." The cell, he says, had been given to them by Alan Niger, earl of Richmond, 400 years before, and the abbey was burdened, by reason of the gift, with masses, suffrages, and alms. Further, as the revenues of the priory do not amount to more than £30, the abbot offers "towards your special, honourable, and laudable purpose concerning the erection and foundation of the said college and school . . 300 marks sterling, which shall be delivered" at once, if the cardinal will spare the monastery.* The representation was of no avail, and Romburgh was annexed to the Ipswich college.

The papal permissions to alienate monastic property thus obtained only served to increase Wolsey's desire for further dissolutions. In October, 1528, Clement VII. was being worried and bullied by the cardinal's agents in the matter of the divorce. In turn they were threatening, exhorting and beseeching the pope to comply with Henry's royal will and even if

* Wright, "Suppr. of Mons.," p. 1.

necessary permit him to have two wives * at once. At this time also Wolsey instructed his agents to make further overtures about monastic property. On behalf of the king they presented a petition that certain religious houses might be given over to support the college at Windsor and King's at Cambridge. These two establishments the agents represented as having been founded by the grandparents of the English king, for education and for the support in old age of court officials. The pope was informed that they were now reduced to poverty, and that Henry could not finish the work through want of means. Clement VII. was, no doubt, only too willing at this critical time to give way in any possible matter to the English king. Hence, "because of all that Henry had done against heresy and for the Holy See," he granted him permission to suppress monasteries to the value of 8,000 ducats, provided that there were not six religious in them and that the inmates were placed in other religious houses.†

At this same time the king and cardinal told their agent Casali to suggest a wholesale suppression, in order to establish more cathedrals in England with the property thus procured. The question was mooted in the consistory, and, according to the agent, all present seemed ready to assent to the king's desire. "As it is a matter, however," he writes, "of

* Calendar, iv., 4897. See Lewis' "Sanders," Introd., p. cxxvi., &c.

† Rymer, xiv., p. 249.

the greatest importance it should be granted with greater authority than could be done then. Power might be asked for the legates to decide which monasteries are fit to be erected into cathedrals, to arrange the revenues &c., and then the whole referred to the pope for confirmation. Cardinal S. Quatuor and De Monte advise this, thinking it too important to be finally settled except in consistory, the pope being present, lest it should be thought that the legates were influenced by private interest." He concludes by asking to be informed exactly of the nature of the king's requests.*

At the same time the writer of the above letter to the king sends another to the cardinal. He tells his master that he has "showed his Holiness the integrity of his intentions towards the Church." He has also pointed out the need of reformation in the English monasteries, "and the suitableness of the present time, when a legate had gone to England," so that Wolsey might not be suspected of acting for his own advantage. Casali thought that the pope was persuaded of the necessity of the erection of new cathedrals and the reform of monasteries; but "he considered for some time the alleged necessity of *suppressing* monasteries of any order." The writer added he was "sure the matter will be managed with dexterity."† What this kind of "dexterity" was likely to be, can be understood from a letter of Gregorio Casali, the brother of the former writer. In this he says that

* Calendar, iv., No. 4886.

† *Ibid*, No. 4900.

he "has told his brother the protonotary and Vincent (his nephew) that importunity is the only way to get anything from the pope."*

The result of the "importunity" soon appeared. Two bulls were issued by Clement VII. on November 14, 1528. In the first it is stated that the king had presented a petition showing that in England there were many monasteries, "in which the proper number (*i.e.*, twelve monks or nuns) were not to be found and which had no proper income for their support. Hence regular discipline was not kept up and the divine office not properly performed. By laxity of restraint the rule of good life was not kept by the monks and nuns therein." The petition further suggested, that if these were united to other religious houses, where the day and night office was properly performed and in which good discipline was maintained, it would be better for religion. Acting on this information and in accordance with this petition, the pope by bull granted Wolsey faculties for the suggested union.†

The second bull had reference to the question of the proposed cathedrals. Henry represented to Clement that monasteries had previously been suppressed for that purpose in England. He suggested that several more should now have their revenues granted to this purpose, and that each cathedral, so erected, should have a revenue of 10,000 ducats from the monastic lands. The pope, having consulted

* Calendar, iv., No. 4956. † Rymer, xiv., p. 272.

with his cardinals, issued a bull desiring further information, which he directed Wolsey to furnish. First, he wished to know whether any and what monasteries had previously been suppressed for such a purpose; secondly, whether there was any need of increasing the number of cathedrals; thirdly, how many monasteries would be required for the purpose and whether the monks were to remain in the cathedrals as canons, bound by the three vows, but taking the dress of seculars. Lastly, he asked what would be the position of the bishop, whether he would be a suffragan of the archbishop, or immediately dependent on the Holy See. Wolsey was directed by the bull to examine witnesses as to these matters, and to send their evidence attested by oath to the pope.*

Even yet, the cardinal of York was not satisfied. He asked to be allowed to suppress a few more monasteries for his colleges. These had apparently already been dissolved on his own authority. "The cardinal further demands," writes Jacobo Salviati to Campeggio, "the union to his college of three monasteries, which are not mentioned in the other bulls. This, too, shall be granted, although his Holiness could have wished that it had not been requested of him. But as it is his most reverend lordship who makes the demand, and for such a purpose, he cannot refuse him, as the elect (bishop) of Bellun is to write to him

* *Ibid.*, xiv., 273.

at greater length, the elect being here and soliciting this 'expedition' with much *importunity.*"*

In the beginning of the following year, 1529, pope Clement VII. fell ill. It was reported, and for the time believed, that he was dead. Upon this the king determined once more to further, as far as he possibly could, the election of Wolsey to the Popedom.† In this design he directed his agent to bribe the cardinals, and in his efforts he was seconded by Wolsey himself. The latter writes to Gardiner, his old secretary, on February 7th :—"When all things be well considered—*absit verbum jactantiæ*—there shall be none found that can and will set remedy in the aforesaid things, but only the cardinal Ebor." He adds, that he wishes his agent to spare no expense in this matter, but to use all his power, promises and labour to bring it to pass.‡ It is certain also from the king's instructions that it was seriously contemplated, in the event of the electors refusing the cardinal of York, to set up an anti-pope and create a schism.§ The emperor foresaw this and when expressing his regret at the illness of Clement, added : "His death might create a schism in Christendom."‖

The Pope recovered. Henry and Wolsey were

* Calendar, iv., No. 4920.

† *Ibid.*, No. 5270.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 5272.

§ Pocock. Records, ii., p. 598. See Lewis' "Sanders." Introd., p. cxxxv. *et seq.*

‖ Calendar, iv., No. 5301.

thus again disappointed in their plans. The bulls, which had been obtained in the autumn of the previous year through the persistent importunity of the English agents, had not been altogether according to Wolsey's pleasure. He desired the removal of the clause "*de consensu quorum interest*" in the permission for the union of various monasteries. The agent had deliberately and on his own authority changed "*less* than twelve monasteries" into "*less or more* than twelve monasteries," which had displeased the cardinal S. Quatuor, and delayed the transmission of the bulls to England. The cardinal of York had neglected also to forward, as requested, copies of the bulls by which, as was said, monasteries had previously been turned into bishoprics.*

At the beginning of June, 1529, the question was still being discussed. Wolsey wrote to Sir Gregory Casali that he wanted certain clauses amplified in bulls he had received. As to the union of monasteries, he desired to have the power of uniting small monasteries as well as of annexing them to greater. The bull for erecting cathedrals only empowered him to inquire and report, but the king and he desired powers to act. He promised that there should be no loss of fees to the court of Rome. He desired the omission of the clause "*de consensu omnium quorum interest,*" not because he thought such interests ought to be neglected, but to prevent factious and malicious opposition. No such clause,

* Calendar, iv., No. 5226.

he urged, was inserted in his former bulls for the suppression of monasteries.*

On the 4th June 1529, the final bull, to allow Wolsey to act on the king's petition for the erection of additional cathedrals, was signed by Clement VII. It was of exactly the same nature as the previous brief, but allowed the king's suggestion to be carried into effect and put the burden of the matter upon the Cardinal's conscience.† On the 31st of the following August the second bull for the union of monasteries, in the required form, received the Pope's seal and signature. The fall of Wolsey, however, prevented any further action under the powers thus granted him.

Among the articles of impeachment which, according to the authority of Lord Herbert, were exhibited in the House of Lords against the Cardinal, several relate to his action against the monasteries. These articles, forty-four in number, were signed by Sir Thomas More and many others. The 13th runs thus :—"And where good hospitality hath been used to be kept in houses and places of religion of this realm, and many poor people thereby relieved, the said hospitality and relief is now decayed and not used. And it is commonly reported that the occasion thereof is, because the said lord Cardinal hath taken such impositions of the rulers of the said houses, as well for his favour in making of abbots and priors as for his visitation by his authority lega-

* Calendar, iv., No. 5639. † Rymer, xiv., p. 291.

tine, and yet, nevertheless, taketh yearly of such religious houses such yearly and continual charges, as they be not able to keep hospitality as they were used to do, which is a great cause that there be so many vagabonds, beggars, and thieves."

The 14th article charges the cardinal with having raised the rents of the lands he received through the suppressions, and made it impossible to farm them with profit.

The 19th says:—"Also the said lord Cardinal hath not only, by his untrue suggestion to the Pope, shamefully slandered many good religious houses and good virtuous men dwelling in them, but also suppressed, by reason thereof, above thirty houses of religion. And where, by the authority of his bull, he should not suppress any house that had more men of religion in number above the number of six or seven, he hath suppressed divers houses that had above the number, and thereupon hath caused divers offices to be found by verdict, untruly, that the religious persons so suppressed had voluntarily forsaken their said houses, which was untrue, and so hath caused open perjury to be committed, to the high displeasure of Almighty God."

In the 24th it is stated:—"Also the same lord Cardinal at many times, when any houses of religion hath been void, hath sent his officers thither, and with crafty persuasions hath induced them to 'compromit' their election in him, and before he named or confirmed any of them, he and his servants re-

ceived so much great goods of them, that in a manner it hath been to the undoing of the house."

Lastly, the 25th says:—"Also, by his authority legatine, the same lord Cardinal hath visited the most part of the religious houses and colleges of this realm, and hath taken from them the twenty-fifth part of their livelihood, to the great extortion of your subjects and derogation of your laws and prerogative, and no law hath been to bear him so to do."*

"Here," says Lord Herbert, "certainly began the taste that our king took of governing in chief the clergy, of which, therefore, as well as the dissolution of monasteries, it seems the first arguments and impressions were derived from the Cardinal."† It is difficult to read the record of Wolsey's arbitrary action as regards the religious houses, and the account of his methods in dealing with the pope, without endorsing this opinion.

* Fiddes, Collect., p. 172 *et seq.* † "Henry VIII.," p. 209.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLY MAID OF KENT.

THE story of Elizabeth Barton, known as the "holy maid of Kent," must form a part of any detailed account of Henry's dealings with the English monasteries. "On all this" (the history of the nun and her companions), writes Burnet, "I have dwelt the longer, both because these are called martyrs by Sanders, and that this did first provoke the king against the regular clergy, and drew after it all the severities that were done in the rest of the reign."* Without wishing to accept this view, it is impossible to pass the incident of the "nun of Kent" without considering the new light thrown upon the story by the calendars of state papers, and also by the publication of some letters of Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador in England at this time.

In 1525 Elizabeth Barton† was a domestic servant

* "Hist. of Reform.," Ed. Pocock, i., p. 246.

† This account is from W. Lambard's "Perambulation of Kent," written in the year 1570. The author says he took the facts from a little pamphlet "containing four-and-twenty leaves," which was written by Edward Thwaites in 1527. It was called "A miraculous

with one Thomas Cobb, a farmer of known respectability. She lived in the parish of Aldington, some twelve miles from Canterbury. About Easter time of that year, when she would have been about eighteen years of age, she was seized with a severe illness. During the progress of the sickness, which continued for seven months and more, she appeared to have frequent ecstasies, or trances. Whilst in one of these and apparently unconscious of all around her she spoke of things taking place at a distance and foretold coming events. At a subsequent date it was declared, by those who condemned her to death, that "she was brought in such debility and weakness of brain because she could not eat nor drink for a long space, that in the violence of her infirmities she seemed to be in trances and spoke and uttered many foolish and idle words."* But at this period, and for years after, no such suggestion was made. Certainly those who knew her best did not look upon her sayings as "foolish and idle." Amongst other things she is said to have foretold the death of one of her master's children, who was ill and the event followed shortly after her prediction. In one of her trances, she declared that the Blessed Virgin had directed her to go to the chapel at Court of Street, where she would be cured of her sickness.

work at Court of Street, in Kent, published to devout people of this time for their spiritual consolation." As all books connected with Elizabeth Barton were destroyed under a provision in the act of her attainder, the pamphlet is known only in Lambard's book.

* Rot. Parl., 25 Hen. VIII. (No. 142).

On her first visit to the shrine, according to the account given of her, she did not receive her health. That, however, did not discourage her and she professed perfect confidence that what had been promised would in good time be granted. Meanwhile her reputation became noised abroad. Either through the parish priest of Aldington, Richard Masters, or by some other means, the rumour reached the ears of the venerable Warham, archbishop of Canterbury. He "directed thither Dr. Bocking, with masters Hadleigh and Barnes, three monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, Father Lewis and his fellow (two observants), his official of Canterbury and the parson of Aldington, with a commission to examine the matter and to inform him of the truth." Their report was favourable. They declared to the archbishop that "they found her sound therein." So that when next she went to our Lady at Court of Street "she entered the chapel with the *'Ave Regina Cælorum'* in prick-song, accompanied with these commissioners, many ladies, gentlewomen and gentlemen of the best degree and three thousand persons besides of the common sort of people."

During the mass, which was celebrated at the shrine, Elizabeth Barton fell into one of her usual trances and was restored to health. She afterwards declared that our Lady desired the shrine of Court of Street to be honoured more faithfully and supported with greater generosity, and that she herself should

enter some convent. Acting on this declaration, archbishop Warham obtained her reception into the Benedictine convent of St. Sepulchre's, near Canterbury. There she subsequently became a nun and continued to preserve a universal reputation for holiness. From time to time, during the seven years of her religious life, she was to all appearance wrapt in ecstasy.*

Little is known of the life which Elizabeth Barton led in the convent. But in this period she spoke strongly and uncompromisingly against sin, and exhorted to penance when chance afforded her an opportunity. If she was moved by an evil spirit, as her enemies afterwards pretended, there never was a clearer case of Satan's kingdom divided against itself. She blamed the general laxity of the age and the "corruption of manners and evil life" to be found then in England. She exhorted people to approach the sacraments and in particular to frequent confession and other good Catholic practices.† Her influence over the minds and hearts of

* The account given on the parliament roll in the act of attainder agrees with the main facts of the story as related above, which is taken from Lambard's account of Thwaites' pamphlet. The attainder, however, declares, as will be subsequently related, that the whole matter was a deception arranged by the two priests, Richard Masters and Dr. Edward Bocking.

† Lambard, p. 148. The act of attainder seems to admit her reputation for sanctity and her influence for good. Richard Morison, the uncompromising supporter of Henry's policy, in a work printed so soon after the execution of the "Holy Maid" as 1537, admits the general opinion of her sanctity. "Tandem comparata

those she came in contact with, as far as is known, was a powerful incentive to their leading a better life. Henry Man, for example, a Carthusian monk and procurator of their house at Sheen, writes early in 1533 to Dr. Bocking, the confessor of the nun, in enthusiastic terms of her. "Let us praise God," he says, "who has raised up this holy virgin, a mother, indeed, to me and a daughter to thee for our salvation. She has raised a fire in some hearts that you would think like unto the operation of the Holy Spirit in the primitive Church if you saw with what frequent tears some bewailed their transgressions."* At a subsequent date the same monk writes, that it is only "of late it has pleased God to give me some knowledge of His secret and wonderful works, which He works daily in His special spiritual daughter. This 'accends' my heart in the love of God." I beg you, he continues in his letter to Dr. Bocking, "to accept me as your spiritual son, and ask the prayers of Elizabeth Barton to obtain grace to mortify myself and live only for Christ."† Another monk of the same monastery writes to the nun asking her prayers for himself, as he finds as yet but little profit to his soul by his leaving the

sanctimoniæ fama, cæpit mirum in modum non plebem, non vulgus imperitum, sed magnates alioqui viros, multos preterea doctores, abbates aliquot, Warramum ipsum archiepiscopum Cantuariensem, atque adeo legatos apostolicos, deludere."—Apomaxis Calumniarum, fol. 72 (1537).

* Calendar, vi., No. 835.

† *Ibid.*, No. 1149.

world.* His letter shows what an exalted idea he had formed of her holiness of life.

Without doubt, however, the most important testimony as to the character of the "holy maid" is the opinion as to her virtues entertained by the venerable bishop Fisher. It must be remembered that the bishop of Rochester was no ordinary man. He was an ecclesiastic of extraordinary ability and learning; and unlike so many other bishops of his age, he had not spent his life and thus, perhaps, blunted his judgment as to spiritual matters, in attendance at court, or by occupation in affairs of state. He was esteemed with justice the most learned bishop in England, and at one time Henry thought there was no ecclesiastic equal to him in Christendom.† Of advanced age and possessed of practical prudence, his judgment balanced by vast and varied experience, he was hardly likely to be at fault in reading the characters of Elizabeth Barton and of her adviser and confessor, Dr. Bocking.‡

* *Ibid.*, No. 1468.

† "Quid quod tanta virtus viri, tanta integritas, tanta fama fuit per inimicorum ora eruperit. Nam Henricus ipse octavus (ut reverendissimus Polus Cardinalis scriptum reliquit), eum in Europæ totius theologos primas tenere multis audientibus fassus est."—B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152, f. 238 b. MS. Life of bishop Fisher.

‡ The venerable bishop Fisher's own opinion as to the care which should be taken in not too readily accepting so-called prophecies may be gathered from the following declaration about Savonarola:—"How can he" (Luther), he writes, "be sure that

When Henry and Crumwell determined to proceed against the nun and her companions, the bishop of Rochester's name was at once noted as one of those who had been connected with them. He had been from the first one of the chief opponents of the divorce of Henry and Catherine, and the esteem in which he was held made him, perhaps, the most dangerous opponent of the royal policy. To Crumwell, whose position depended on the maintenance of the divorce and the completion of the marriage of the king with Anne Boleyn, the chance of striking a blow at Fisher, by connecting him with the business of the nun of Kent, was not to be lost. He sent the bishop a message, with what was, no doubt, a

all his teaching is from heaven, unless it was clearly revealed to him? Even if it had been revealed, such revelations are generally deceitful. For what are thought to emanate from God are often found to proceed from the devil. Does not St. Paul say, Satan transfigures himself into an angel of light? . . . And there was also in our own times a not unlearned man, Jerome, of Florence, who persistently foretold to the Florentines many things that were to happen, on which account he was greatly thought of by rulers and people. But after his death none of the things he had prophesied came to pass, by which indication it is clear (if we believe Jeremiah) these prophecies were not from God. . . . Jerome himself was, therefore, deceived (as may be seen), although he was a man illustrious in his preaching and life (as far as human judgment can know), not swerving a hair's breadth in his teaching from the orthodox Fathers, except that he despised the excommunication passed against him and taught others also to disregard it. Wherefore, if so great and Catholic a man could be seduced by revelations, what certainty can we have of the revelations of Luther?" Assertionum Regis Defensio, Cap. i., Opera, ed. 1597, p. 109.

treacherous piece of advice. He urged that his best policy was to plead guilty and throw himself on the royal mercy. Fisher's reply is not known to exist; but the long rejoinder of Crumwell gives us a clear knowledge of the contents of the lost letter. "Where," writes the minister, "you labour to excuse yourself of your hearing, believing, and concealing of the nun's false and feigned revelations and of your manifold sending your chaplain unto her, by a certain intent, which you pretend yourself to have had, to know by 'commonyng' with her, whether her revelations were of God or no, alledging divers scriptures that you were bound to prove them and not to receive them before they were proved; my lord, whether you have used a due mean to try her and her revelations or no, it appeareth by the proof of your own letters. For where you write that you *had conceived a great opinion of the holiness of this woman* for many considerations rehearsed in your letters, whereof the first is grounded upon the bruit (general report) and fame of her; the second upon her entering into religion after her trances and disfiguration; the third upon rehearsal that her ghostly father, being learned and religious, should testify that she was a maid of great holiness; the fourth upon the report that divers other virtuous priests, men of good learning and reputation, should so testify of her, with which ghostly father and priests you never spoke as you confess in your letter; the fifth upon the praises of my late lord of

Canterbury, who showed you (as you write) that she had many great visions;* the sixth upon this saying of the prophet Amos, '*Non favet Dominus Deus verbum nisi revelaverit secretum suum ad servos suos prophetas.*' "†

Crumwell, as might be expected, made light of these reasons given by the bishop for "conceiving a great opinion as to the holiness" of Elizabeth Barton. He declared that, in his opinion, the bishop's belief in her was founded on his opposition to the king's divorce and because her revelations agreed with his own view and wishes in the matter. He told him plainly that his excuses for not having told the king that he had knowledge of the nun's revelation were worthless. "If the matter come to trial," he added, "your own confession in these letters, besides the witnesses which are against you, will be sufficient to condemn you."‡ He concluded

* N. Harpsfield, "Pretended Divorce," Camd. Soc., p. 178, says of Warham's part in this: "This Warham was brought up in New Colleges of Winchester and Oxford, a man, besides his great learning, of deep profound wisdom, and was lord chancellor of the realm before the cardinal." He fell under the king's displeasure "for concealing the matter of the nun, Elizabeth Barton . . . and Crumwell, that after the fall of the cardinal grew in high estimation and credit with the king, scornfully and spitefully said that if the king would be ruled by him because he was an archbishop he should be hanged on high that he might with his heels bless all the world."

† Wright, "Suppress. of Monast.," Camd. Soc. p. 27.

‡ Amos, "Statutes of H. VIII.," p. 52, says: "Fisher deserves the admiration of posterity in withstanding Crumwell's tempting promise of forgiveness on condition of 'writing to the king,

by again urging the bishop to throw himself on the king's mercy for the "negligence, oversight and offence committed against his highness in this behalf, and I dare undertake that his highness shall benignly accept you into his gracious favour, all matter of displeasure past before this time forgotten and forgiven."*

The bid thus made for the support of bishop Fisher to the royal policy at the expense of throwing over the "maid of Kent," even when coupled with the threat of condemnation if he refused to plead guilty, failed in its purpose. His name, therefore, was included in the act of attainder which was presented to parliament in February, 1534. The bishop was ill, and begged to be allowed to remain away from his place in the House of Lords. At the same time, he declared to the king, that he would have told him all he knew as to the nun's revelations concerning himself, had he not learned for certain that he had already been informed of them by the holy maid herself.†

In another letter, written at this period to the "lords of parliament," Fisher repeats the reasons he had already given in his letter to Crumwell why he had listened to the nun. After appealing to

recognizing his offence and entreating pardon.' He refused to purchase safety by a lie, and by denouncing himself as breaker of a law that he had never violated; his feigned penitence might have prejudiced persons involved with him in the same indictment."

* Wright, *ut sup.*

† Calendar, vii., No. 239.

them not to pass any act against him till his cause has been heard, he says :—"And for the mean season it may please you to consider that I sought not for this woman's coming unto me, nor thought in her any manner of deceit. She was the person that by many probable and likely conjectures I then reputed to be right honest religious and very good and virtuous. I verily supposed that such feigning and crafty compassing of any guile or fraud had been far from her. And what deceit was this in me to think so when I had so many probable testimonies of her virtue? First, the report of the country, which generally called her the 'holy maid;' secondly, her entry into religion upon certain visions which it was commonly said that she had; thirdly for the good religion and learning that was thought to be in her ghostly father and in other virtuous and well-learned priests that then testified to her holiness as it was commonly reported; finally, my lord of Canterbury that then was, both her ordinary and a man reputed of high wisdom and learning, told me she had many great visions, and of him I learned greater things than ever I heard of the nun herself."* The bishop

* It may be of interest to give here the testimony of the learned Erasmus as to the worth of archbishop Warham, in order to judge how much reason there was, and is, to trust to his opinion of the Holy Maid. "Here I am reminded of a man worthy of the memory of all posterity, William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England; not only by that title, but in reality a theologian. He was a doctor of both laws; he had distinguished himself in some embassies successfully accomplished; and he had acquired the favour and esteem of Henry the Seventh, a prince of

once more declared that he had every reason to believe the woman "honest, religious, and of good credence," since she had so many reliable testimonies "for goodness and virtue."† To most people in these days the opinion which the learned, prudent, and saintly bishop Fisher had formed of the "holy maid of Kent" must weigh very strongly against the views of her enemies.

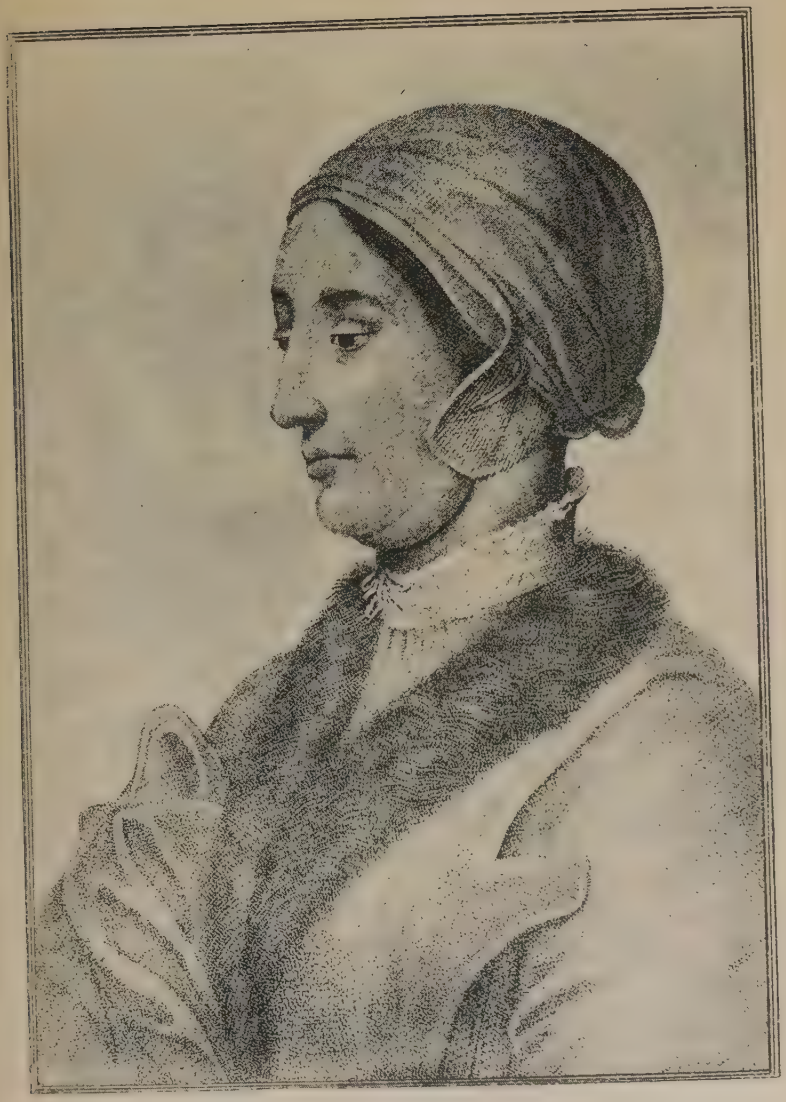
the highest judgment. By these steps he was raised to the eminence of the Church of Canterbury, which ranks foremost in dignity in that island. To this charge, exceeding burdensome in itself, was added another still more so. He was obliged to undertake the office of chancellor, which indeed with the English is truly royal; and to this officer is the honour paid of having the royal crown, with the sceptre placed upon it, borne before him whenever he goes forth in public. For he is, as it were, the eye, the mouth, and the right hand of the king, and the supreme judge of the whole British dominion. This office he filled with such skill for many years that you would have said he was born for that very business and held no other charge. But at the same time he was so vigilant and attentive in matters relating to religion and his ecclesiastical functions that you would say he was engaged in no external concerns. He found time sufficient to discharge religiously the solemn duty of prayer, to perform mass almost daily, to be present besides at two or three services, to hear causes, to receive embassies, to advise the king if anything of importance had arisen in court, to visit his churches whenever his presence was required, to receive his guests, often amounting to two hundred. For occupations so various he found one life sufficient, no part of which he bestowed on hunting, none on dice, none on empty tales, none on luxury or pleasures. In the place of all these amusements he had either some agreeable reading or conversation with a learned man." (Ecclesiastes of Erasmus. Note in "Pilgrimages to Walsingham and Canterbury," ed. J. Gough Nichols, F.S.A., 1875, p. 177.)

† Calendar, vii., No. 240.

By the middle of 1533 Henry appears to have arranged with Crumwell to take some steps to prevent any public condemnation of his marriage with Anne, resulting from the denunciations of Elizabeth Barton. Even before the death of archbishop Warham, according to Harpsfield,* Crumwell had contemplated the advisability of taking vigorous measures against the nun and those that believed in her. She had declared, more or less openly, that in her trances God had commissioned her to bear testimony to His displeasure at the king's proceedings. She was known to have had interviews with Wolsey and Warham, to have spoken to the legates of the pope and to have written to his holiness himself. It is hardly likely that her influence had much to do with the final attitude of the archbishop or the cardinal towards the divorce. Neither is it probable that it confirmed the bishop of Rochester and the friars Observant in their persistent opposition to it; nor, still less, that it deterred the pope from giving sentence in Henry's favour. But such things were said† and, perhaps, believed by Henry's adherents. Even Cranmer, in writing to archdeacon Hawkins an account of the nun, says :—"I think she marvellously hindered the king's marriage, for she wrote to the pope charging him to stop it. She also had communication with my lord Cardinal and with my lord of Canterbury, my predecessor in the matter,

* "The Pretended Divorce," Camd. Soc., p. 178.

† Calendar, vii., No. 72, (1) and (3).



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and in mine opinion staid them very much in the matter."*

Whatever may have been her influence, she made no secret of her opinions. The king was well aware of it. In fact, she sought an interview with him, in which she boldly blamed what he had done and warned him that what he was contemplating would bring upon him the displeasure of God. She seems even to have ventured to tell him that to persevere in his policy would be to forfeit his crown. Unfortunately for herself she had not confined her warnings to the royal ear. Her sayings, about God's displeasure at the king's doings, as well as her hints of further possible consequences to Henry, began to be whispered about. And no doubt they were magnified and multiplied on their passage to the ear of the ever watchful Crumwell.

The position of affairs in England at midsummer, 1533, was critical. It became, therefore, vital to the designs of minister and master, and indispensable to Anne Boleyn, who now reigned supreme over the heart of Henry, that any symptom of popular discontent should be instantly repressed. Anything that might tend to stir up the latent feeling of hostility to their triple alliance must at all costs be prevented. Hence, as regards the "holy maid of Kent," so universally revered and respected, it was necessary in the first place to fix the stigma of hypocrisy and deceit upon her.

* Calendar, vi., No. 1519.

This was vital in order to discredit her in the eyes of the people and to anticipate any ill effect that might result from their belief in her supernatural direction. Crumwell from the first, of necessity, affected to regard her with contempt. Under his direction parliament subsequently declared her to be, what, even before any examination, he had suggested, "the *hypocrite* nun." *

Cranmer, acting on the orders of Crumwell, about the middle of July, 1533, ordered the prioress of St. Sepulchres to bring Elizabeth Barton to him at Otford in order that he might examine her.† At this interview the archbishop was apparently unable to convict the nun of anything more than a firm belief in the reality of her visions and revelations. On August 11th Richard Gwent, the dean of Arches, wrote to Crumwell an account of this examination. "When," he says, "my lord of Canterbury had examined the nun of Canterbury upon your interrogatories she began to come near home and desired to speak with my lord apart, and then she confessed many mad follies. And most of all was, that at Whitsuntide last she, being in a trance, had partly an answer of the king's highness and of the queen's grace; but it was no certain answer what end they should have in the matter. But she had this answer, that without fail at the next trance she should have a determinate answer; and therefore she desired licence of my lord to go to Court of Street, and there

* Calendar, vi., No. 887. † Calendar, No. 869.

this week she shall have a trance and then she shall know perfectly." He adds that the archbishop gave her the permission, "hoping thereby to perceive her foolish dissimulation." But for "your interrogatories," he concludes, "she would have confessed nothing, for my lord doth yet but dally with her *as he did believe her every word;* and as soon as he hath all he can get of her, she shall be sent to you."*

A month later Dr. Bocking "cellarer of Christchurch, Canterbury, and Hadley, one of the penitentiaries there," were arrested by the attorney general, Christopher Hales, "as secretly as possible." At the same time a promise was sent by Hales to Crumwell that he should have the parson of Aldington and the official of Canterbury within a few days.† The nun herself had been in the minister's power and subjected to his examinations since her visit to Cranmer. It is worthy of note that from this time all that is known of her recantations and confessions emanate from Crumwell or his agents, who had already determined to make her out to be a "hypocrite nun."

As to the connection of the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury with the cause of Elizabeth Barton, a good deal is to be learnt from a letter which at this time Thomas Goldwell, the prior, wrote to Crumwell on the matter. "As concerning the knowledge of such

* Calendar, vi., No. 967.

† *Ibid*, No. 1149. Christ. Hales to Crumwell, Sept. 25.

things as Elizabeth Barton, nun, has spoken," he writes, "which as she said she had knowledge of in trances and revelations, these be the things that I have heard and have knowledge of. At the beginning thereof, the which was about seven or eight years past, as I think, my lord Warham, then being archbishop of Canterbury, sent his comptroller, called Thomas Walle, of Canterbury, and caused me to send two of my brethren, which were the cellarer, Dr. Bocking, and Dom William Hadley, bachelor of divinity, to a place called Court of Street, to see this woman and to see what trances she had. They went there at the beginning, as I suppose, somewhat against their minds and also against my mind except the obedience that I do owe unto my lord of Canterbury; and (if) he had not been I would not have sent them thither. After this he caused and gave license to the cellarer to be this woman's ghostly father." He then goes on to describe how he had become acquainted himself with the nun through father Risby, warden of the friars Observant at Canterbury, who considered her "a person much in the favour of God and had special knowledge of Him in many things," and that he would "have much spiritual comfort in her conversation." And he concluded by an account of the various revelations that, as he had heard, she had made from time to time.*

Amongst others who were examined by Crumwell's

* Wright, "Suppression of Mon.," Camd. Soc., p. 19.

order to discover anything which could inculpate Elizabeth Barton in treasonable practices, was a certain Christopher Warner, an anchorite "within the black friars, Canterbury." He acknowledged that both Dr. Bocking and the nun had been to see him often "out of charity, because," as he said, "I am a prisoner." Dr. Bocking had always shown himself a singular friend, "wherefore," he added, "I pray God comfort him." At the same time he declared that he had never seen the nun in an ecstasy, though he had often heard such reports about her. "And," he continued, "by her perfect life and virtue I thought it supernatural." He moreover never heard her speak against the king, and all she had ever said in his hearing about the marriage was, "that if it went forward she thought it would turn to great trouble." The anchorite concluded by expressing a hope which must have raised a smile on the face of Thomas Crumwell as he read the evidence. The wish of the good man was twofold. That "this matter might be indifferently handled, for it is like to be the greatest scandal in the church," and that he might not be troubled again, adding: "it is a great hindrance to my contemplation that I should have in Almighty God."* Crumwell was hardly likely to handle any matter "indifferently" when it did not suit his purpose, and he was certainly not the man to care whether a thing interfered with an anchorite's "contemplation."

* Calendar, vi., No. 1336.

It is evident that at this time every endeavour was being made to incriminate the "holy maid of Kent" and her companions, together with many persons of higher rank and social position, in a conspiracy against the state. In view of Crumwell's letter to Fisher, already noted, and his persistently pressing him to seek pardon of the king for "all matter of displeasure past before this time," it is impossible to resist the belief that the affair of the nun was intended either to frighten the staunch adherents of Catherine into submission, or to involve them in common ruin as traitors. The dethroned queen and her daughter Mary resolutely refused to acknowledge by any act of theirs the justice of the king's action in their regard, or the lawfulness of Cranmer's sentence of divorce. This firmness was attributed to the support derived from the secret suggestions of Elizabeth Barton and her companions. Crumwell's notes* at this period are full of items concerning the doings, real and imaginary, of the supposed conspirators. The king likewise complained to the French ambassador that Catherine and her daughter had been seduced from all dutiful obedience to his wishes by the baneful influence of the nun.† How little truth there was in this suggestion may be learnt from a letter of Chapuys written in November, 1533. "He" (the king), says the imperial ambassador, "has lately imprisoned a nun who had

* *Ibid.*, Nos. 1149, 1370, 1381-2.

† *Ibid.*, No. 1372. Memoranda by the French Ambassador.

always lived till this time as a good, simple and saintly woman, and had many revelations. The cause of her imprisonment is, that she had a revelation that this king in a short time would not only lose his kingdom, but that he should be damned, and she had seen the place prepared for him in hell. Many have been taken up on suspicion of having encouraged her to such prophecies to stir up the people to rebellion. It seems as if God inspires the queen on all occasions to conduct herself well and avoid all inconveniences and suspicions, for the nun had been very urgent at divers times to speak with her and console her in her great affliction, but the queen would never see her. Yet the council do not desist from making continual inquiry whether the queen has had any communication with her. She has no fear for herself, as she never had any, but she fears for the marquis and marchioness of Exeter and the good bishop of Rochester, who have been very familiar with her."*

About this time Elizabeth Barton and her companions underwent a strict examination in the Star chamber. Almost simultaneously it became noised abroad that she had confessed herself an impostor. On the 16th of November John Capon, abbot of Hyde, and at that time bishop-elect of Bangor, wrote to a friend that "our holy nun of Kent" had admitted "treason against God and the king;" that is, he explained, she is "not only a traitress but a heretic."

* Calendar, vi., No. 1419. Novemb. 12th, 1533.

She and her accomplices are "like to suffer death."* Lady Rutland, also writing the following day to Sir W. Paston, says she hears that the "holy woman of Kent" has been examined by the council, "which is," she concludes, "one of the most abominablest matters that ever I heard of in my life, as shall be published to all people within three or four days at the furthest."†

The abbot of Hyde was somewhat premature in his information as to the execution of the nun and the others. Crumwell no doubt calculated on obtaining a conviction. Unexpected difficulties, however, were raised, which subsequently obliged him to proceed against them by a bill of attainder passed by a subservient parliament. Chapuys, who was apparently present, gives an account of what happened. "The king," he tells his master, "has assembled the principal judges and many prelates and nobles, who have been employed three days, from morning to night, to consult on the crimes and superstitions of the nun and her adherents; and at the end of this long consultation, which the world imagines is for a more important matter, the chancellor at a public audience, where were people from all the counties of this kingdom, made an oration how that all the people of this kingdom were greatly obliged to God, who by his divine goodness had brought to light the damnable abuses and great wickedness of the said nun and of her accomplices."

* *Ibid.*, No. 1433. † *Ibid.*, vi., No. 1438.

The ambassador then goes on to describe how the chancellor declared the king's marriage with Anne valid and good, and "the sentence said to have been given by the pope against the king" of no force "because his holiness had been induced to pass it by improper means and especially by the diabolic plot of the said nun, who had written to him a thousand persuasions, which she authorized in a spirit of prophecy and divine revelation in case he did not give sentence."

"Up to this point no one dared to say a word or to make the smallest sign of pleasure or displeasure. But on the chancellor proceeding to say that the nun and the accomplices, in her detestable malice desiring to incite the people to rebellion, had spread abroad and written that she had a divine revelation, that the king would soon be shamefully driven from his kingdom by his own subjects, some of them began to murmur and cry that she merited fire. The said nun, who was present, had so much resolution that she showed not the least fear or astonishment, clearly and openly alleging that what the chancellor said was true." . . .

"Many believe that those who have the said nun in hand will make her accuse many unjustly in order to take vengeance on the queen's party, and get money from them, which is the thing he thinks most of in this world. The said nun has been almost entirely under the keepership of Crumwell or his people, and is continually treated as a grand lady

(grosse dame) which strongly confirms the above named suspicion."*

"The chief business still remains, for the king insists *a plus non pouvoir* that the said accomplices of the nun be declared heretics for having given faith to her, and also be guilty of high treason for not having revealed what concerned the king; consequently their goods should be confiscated. To this the judges during the last three days will not agree, as being without any appearance of reason, even as to the last, since the nun a year ago had told the king of it in person. It is to be feared, however, that they will do what the king desires, as they did when they condemned the Cardinal for having received his legateship." †

The discussion here spoken of was adjourned for a few days. Meantime a singular spectacle was witnessed in London in connection with the holy maid of Kent. On Sunday, November 23rd, 1533, she and her companions, Dr. Edward Bocking and John Dering, both benedictine monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, Hugh Rich and Richard Risby, two friars of Observants, with two secular priests,

* The translation here given of "grosse dame" is not that of the editor of the Calendar. It would seem a more probable meaning than "stupid lady." Crumwell might hope by good treatment to get her to "accuse many unjustly," while the accusations of a "fool" would hardly serve his purpose. If this was his motive it was defeated by the constancy of the nun, who made no such accusation. P. de Gayangos translates the phrase by "high born lady" (Spanish St. Papers iv., No. 1153.)

† Calendar, vi., No. 1445. Nov. 20.

Richard Masters, parson of Aldington and Henry Gold, of Aldermary, London, together with a gentleman named Edward Thwaits, were placed on a high scaffold at St. Paul's cross to do public penance, The pulpit, over against them, was occupied by Dr. Capon, the bishop-elect of Bangor, who, as Chapuys relates, "for their vituperation repeated all the chancellor had said against them, further affirming that the nun, by her feigned superstition, had prevented the cardinal of York from proceeding to give sentence for the divorce." * To the companions of the nun in this public humiliation the preacher attributed "levity and superstition" in believing these revelations, and "disloyalty" for not revealing them. He specially blamed the two Observant friars, "that under the shadow of the said superstition they had suborned and seduced their companions to maintain the false opinion and wicked quarrel of the queen against the king." †

From this public penance, which was performed in "as great a presence as was seen there (at the cross) this forty winters," ‡ the nun and her companions were again conducted "unto the Tower of London, and much people (were gathered) through all the streets of London" § to witness the sight. Before leaving the platform over against the prea-

* Calendar, vi., No. 1460. Chapuys to Chas. V. Nov. 24.
† Calendar, vii., No, 72.
‡ Calendar, vii., No. 72.
§ "Grey Friars Chronicle." Camd. Soc., p. 37.

cher's pulpit, the nun was required to hand a form of confession to Dr. Capon, who read it to the people. "I, dame Elizabeth Barton," it ran, "do confess that I, most miserable and wretched person, have been the original of all this mischief, and by my falsehood have deceived all these persons here and many more, whereby I have most grievously offended almighty God and my most noble sovereign, the king's grace. Wherefore I humbly, and with heart most sorrowful, desire you to pray to Almighty God for my miserable sins, and ye that may do me good to make supplication to my most sovereign for me for his gracious mercy and pardon."*

A great deal was subsequently made of this so-called confession of the nun. It requires, however, very little knowledge of these times to see that it proves exceedingly little. On the face of the document it is not her own. It was written for her by those in whose power she had been for the four months previously and its terms are exceedingly vague and general. Chapuys, as we have seen, had already expressed the opinion of many, that those who "had the nun in hand," who were "almost entirely Crumwell and his people," would make her do something of this sort. Moreover, the demeanour

* Calendar, Vol. vii., No. 72 (11). It is generally stated that all those who did penance handed similar confessions to the preacher, but there does not appear to be any sign of this. In fact, the form of confession used by the nun would tend to show that hers was the only one. It certainly is the only one mentioned in the state papers of this time.

which the ambassador describes as maintained by the nun in public, when some of the audience, taking the chancellor's cue, cried out that she merited fire, is hardly to be reconciled with a voluntary confession two days subsequently. Under the most trying circumstances she declared at the trial, that the chancellor's account of her revelation "was true." The acknowledgment of falsehood, therefore, at the Cross is, to say the least, suspicious. It was most important for Crumwell's ends and the king's service, that the popular mind should be disabused of any belief in the reality of the nun's revelation. Of the general agreement previously as to her sanctity there can be no doubt. The ambassador of Charles V. records the rumour that the spectacle enacted at Paul's cross was to be repeated twice again at that place, and then in other parts of England; and this "in order to efface the general impression of the nun's sanctity, because this people is peculiarly credulous, and is easily moved to insurrections by prophecies, and in its present disposition is glad to hear any to the king's disadvantage."*

Some acknowledgment, therefore, that Elizabeth Barton had been for years wilfully deceitful was a matter of vital necessity, and, with Crumwell to manage the affair, that confession would not be difficult to procure. In fact, the draft of a letter exists, with corrections in Crumwell's own hand, by which the Marchioness of Exeter is made to ask pardon of

* Calendar, Vol. vi., No, 1460. Nov. 24.

Henry VIII. for putting such belief "in the most unworthy and deceivable woman called the holy maid of Kent."* What he did in this case, he may, with better reason, have used every effort to do in regard to the nun herself. According to the act of attainder, indeed, the poor woman is said to have confessed her duplicity and falsehood before "divers of the king's counsel." Such evidence, however, may reasonably be suspected, more especially when it was noised abroad that the confession attributed to her was a calumny,† and extreme measures were taken to prevent the spread of such an unwelcome report. One preacher at St. Paul's cross, in particular, declared as much and for his boldness found himself lodged in prison. In his appeal to be let out, he stated that he was treated even worse than other prisoners, being enclosed in a cell of the narrowest limits and most filthy description and absolutely prevented from holding communication with his friends or even with his fellow captives. This John Rudd, who according to his own account had been a well-read professor of the classics, assures the bishop-elect of Chester, by whose good offices he hopes to obtain his deliverance, that the only fault of which he is accused is of having spoken about the confessions

* Calendar, vi., No. 1464.

† Burnet, ed. Pocock, i., p. 251, says: "It is very probable that the reports that went abroad of her being forced or cheated into a confession, made the king think it necessary to proceed more severely against her."

Benedictine Nun.

attributed to the nun of Kent and her companions. He had, indeed, said "their wickedness deserved even greater punishment; nevertheless, that what was imputed to them on published confessions was altogether a calumny; and, he was assured by persons worthy of credit, that they were not convicted of that matter before the king's council; further, that this was evident, because no mention was made of it in the abbot's sermon in which their misdeeds were denounced."*

This confession, however, is of considerable importance as evidence in favour of the religious and priests, who a few months later were attainted and suffered death with the Holy maid of Kent. The act of attainder suggests that the secular priest, Richard Masters the parson of Aldington was the first to persuade Elizabeth Barton to pretend to ecstatic favours from God and the gift of prophecy. Also that, with the help of the Christchurch monk Dr. Bocking, he had arranged with the woman to simulate the miraculous cure at Court of Street. Even an unusually fair and able historian like Canon Dixon evidently considers that the whole matter was an arranged deception on the part of those connected with it. In fact he states, that "the poor girl was persuaded to continue by simulation the contortions and ejaculations, which owed their origin to infirmity; she became a professed nun, and the complete tool of a gang of designing monks and friars."† But if we ex-

* Calendar, vii., No. 303. † "Hist. of Ch. of Eng.," i., p. 200.

cept the declaration of the attainder, which is really only evidence of what Crumwell would willingly have wished people to believe, and the so-called speech the chronicler Hall puts into her mouth at Tyburn, but which, without corroborative testimony, cannot be unreservedly received, there is nothing to show that any of the priests or religious did more than put trust in what they considered undoubted signs of holiness. In fact, if the confession made at St. Paul's cross is worth anything at all, it is a proof that at that time, so far from making accusations against others, Elizabeth Barton declared that she herself was the "original of all this mischief." The same is evident also in every reference to a so-called acknowledgment of guilt to be found in the state papers of the period.

It would be unnecessary, even were it possible, to examine into the revelations or prophecies of Elizabeth Barton, except in so far as they had any bearing upon the treason for which she and her companions were condemned. As to the rest, no doubt many of the tales told about her visions were grossly, although perhaps unintentionally, exaggerated. Others were probably without any foundation whatever. Sir Thomas More, at the time, took this view. Writing to Crumwell as to the relations he had maintained with the nun, about which it will be necessary to speak later, he confesses that he thought several of the stories improbable. As an example, he takes the anecdote about the Sacred Host said to have been brought to her from Calais, when the king

was hearing mass there. Of this he says, that he "does not remember whether he heard it at the time or since she was in hold; but he thought it too marvellous to be true, and very likely that she had told some man her dream, who told it out for a revelation." He does not believe many of the stories that are told of her and her visions, but, as he has never heard them from her own lips, many of them may be mere fabrications, "and she a very virtuous woman, too, as some lies are peradventure written of some that be saints in heaven, and yet many miracles done by them for all that."*

The purport of the revelation, which concerned the king and which was afterwards declared by the parliament to be treason, may be learnt from bishop Fisher's declaration as to what the nun had herself told him. There were, it is true, certain variations as to the precise nature of the declaration, but we may take the testimony of the venerable bishop Fisher as most likely to be exact. In his letter, addressed to the Lords of Parliament, he states that what the nun told him about the king was this:—"She said she had a revelation from God that, if the king went forth with the purpose that he intended, he should not be king of England seven months after, and she told me she had told the king." † This statement he also made in his communication with Henry himself.‡

* Calendar, vii., No. 287. † *Ibid.*, No. 240.

‡ Calendar, No. 239. It is unnecessary to defend this saying of the nun, but it may be well here to note as a coincidence that *de jure* the prediction was verified. In April, 1533, Anne Boleyn was

As to the use of force, or incitement to rebellion against the king, there never was any suggestion of such aids to Providence on the part of the nun or those who believed in her. Again, on this point the declaration of the bishop of Rochester is precise. "I conceived not by these words," he writes to Henry, "I take it upon my soul, that any malice or evil was intended or meant unto your highness by any mortal man, but only that they were the threats of God as she did then affirm." * This he repeats in his declaration to parliament; "and, as I will answer before the throne of Christ, I knew not of any malice or evil that was intended by her or by any other earthly creature unto the king's highness, neither her words did so sound that by any temporal or worldly power such things were intended, but only by the power of God of whom, as she then said, she had this revelation to show the king." †

The venerable Bishop was included in the act of

declared Queen; in May Cranmer pronounced a sentence of divorce. In July the pope annulled this sentence and excommunicated Henry and Anne if they did not separate before September, subsequently extended to October. Henry disregarded the sentence, and was *ipso facto* excommunicated in October, just seven months after Anne Boleyn was declared queen. And by the laws of Christendom, which were then in force in England, and by which the father of Henry VIII. had been confirmed on the throne by the pope, every excommunicated person forfeited all civil rights (Hergenröther, Vol. i., p. 307. Vol. ii., p. 387). *Cf. Dub. Review*, April, 1877.

* Calendar, vii., No. 239.

† Calendar, vii., No. 240, *ut sup.*

attainder with others, for having concealed the nun's prophecy from the king. According to Crumwell's plan, arranged before the meeting of parliament, they were for this to be "attainted of misprision, suffer imprisonment at the king's will, and lose all their goods."* It is well therefore to state clearly that it was known, the nun herself had declared the matter to the king. Fisher told Henry in his letter that "if she had told me this revelation, and had not also told me that she had reported the same unto your grace, I† had been very far to blame, and worthy extreme punishment for not disclosing the same unto your highness or else to some of your counsell." To the lords also he declared that the prioress of her convent and the servants had assured him that the nun had been with the king.

Every endeavour was made to include Sir Thomas More in the list of those to be dealt with in regard to this matter. It has been more than once stated that the absence of his name from the act was due to the exertions of the chancellor Audley and Thomas Crumwell in his behalf. There seems little likelihood that this was the case. Crumwell had no reason to spare More, unless he could bring him over to the king's side. To involve him, therefore, in the dangers of complicity in treason might

* *Ibid.*, No. 70.

† Mr. Gairdner (Vol. vii., No. 239) makes the bishop say that *she* would have been worthy of extreme punishment. The bishop's words are as given above.

have the effect of causing the ex-chancellor to try and save his life or his goods at the expense of his conscience. There would appear to be little doubt that, with this view, the minister had striven to include Fisher's revered name amongst those attainted, or to drive him by pleading guilty to accept the royal pardon on any terms.* There is a curious revelation of Crumwell's desire to fix the charge upon More, in the depositions against Elizabeth Barton. Amongst the papers, stating by whom and to whom the nun's revelations had been shown, there is the following:—"He" (Father Risby) "confesseth that he hath showed other revelations to Sir Thomas More, but none concerning the king for that he would not hear them." This statement is run through with a pen, and in its place is the entry, "*Sir Thomas More.*" This has every appearance of being in Crumwell's own hand † and is added to the list of those, who had knowledge of the nun's saying about the king.

If the project failed, it was because More had clearly from the first refused even to listen to anything the nun had said about the king; in fact, he had warned her of the danger of speaking about any such revelations. Eight or nine years before, the king had asked More's opinion about the nun and had given him a parchment roll of her visions,

* More's name was included in the bill until after it had been read the third time. *Vide* "Lords' Journals," p. 72.

† Calendar, vi., No. 1468 (2).

which Warham had lent him, and Sir Thomas had told him that he did not think much of them, "but did not like to be bold in judging the matter." Many years afterwards, he had met her at the convent of Sion and after an interview of some length, which took place in a chapel, he formed a good opinion of her virtue. It is true, that after he had seen the open penance at St. Paul's cross, he looked upon the whole matter as "a detestable hypocrisy." He, however, founded this opinion on the "confession" of falsehood and duplicity, which Elizabeth Barton was said to have made. Perhaps, had he known Thomas Crumwell, as history has revealed him to us of a subsequent age, he would have suspected the result of his "practising" with the nun. More's letter to the minister concludes with saying :—"Verily this woman so handled herself, with the help of the evil spirit that inspired her, that after her confession at St. Paul's cross, when I sent word by my servant to the proctor at the Charterhouse that she was undoubtedly proved a false, deceiving hypocrite, the good man had had so good opinion of her so long that he could at the first scarcely believe me therein. Howbeit it was not he alone that thought her so very good, but many another right good man besides, as little marvel was upon so good report."*

* Calendar, vii., No. 287. The value to be attached to Fisher's and More's belief in the nun is thus stated by Richard Morison in 1537:—"Thomas Morus, et Joannes Roffensis, quoniam sæpius illam adierunt, omnique honore dignabantur, paucissimi erant qui

The day following the public penance of the nun and her companions Chapuys again refers to the difficulty experienced by the king and Crumwell to obtain a conviction for treason. "The king," he tells his master, "has not yet prevailed on the judges to make the oration against those who have practised against him with the said nun in the form that I last wrote. He is going to have the affair discussed with them on Friday (November 28th, 1533), and although some of the principal judges would sooner die than make the said declaration, yet when the king comes to dispute, there is no one who will dare to contradict him unless he wishes to be reputed stupid or disloyal. So that it seems as if he had made a total divorce, not only from his wife, but from good conscience, humanity and gentleness, which he used to have."*

The trial, however, ended without a sentence. In the face of the opposition manifested by the judges to the course proposed by Crumwell, it may have been deemed more prudent to proceed by the surer method of attainder by act of parliament. It seems

poterant, in animum inducere, non ope numinis geri quæcumque illic gerebantur. Roffensis enim sanctior putabatur, quam ut a sanctimonia hypocrisin, a virtutibus vitia, discernere non posset. Morus ingeniosior habitus est quam ut monacha illi os oblinere posset." "Apomaxis calumniarum," f. 74. The same author also says that Silvester Darius, an envoy of Pope Clement VII., was so struck with the sanctity of the nun that he fell on the ground "and reverently kissed," her feet, f. 74d.

* *Ibid.*, vi., No. 1460, Nov. 24.

at one time, early in January, 1534, to have been contemplated to try the issue of a new trial. Crumwell notes, "to cause indictments to be drawn for the offenders in treason and misprision concerning the nun of Canterbury."* Shortly afterwards he abandoned this plan, however, and notes that he has to "know what the king will have done" in the matter. Finally, it was determined to present a bill of attainder to parliament, and for Crumwell this was already tantamount to a condemnation to death. Hence he notes that "Elizabeth Barton, nun, Edward Bocking, John Dering, Richard Masters, Henry Gold, Hugh Rich, and Richard Risby, these by act *shall be attainted* of high treason *and suffer death.*"†

There are many indications that, although the existence of the bill and the general tenour of its provisions were known, the names of those implicated and against whom proceedings were to be taken were purposely concealed. "The consequence was," says an historian of this period, "that everybody who ever encouraged the nun was in no little anxiety, and, fearing that his name might be on the terrible list, was anxious to please the king. In this way the government bridled the opposition, and, as nearly as they could, ensured the passing of the bills of succession." ‡ By this concealment also money was wrung from those, who had been associated with the

* Calendar, vii., No. 48. † *Ibid.*, No. 70.

‡ P. Friedmann, "Anne Boleyn," Vol. i., p. 273.

nun in any way. For this both master and minister were always ready. Richard Masters the parish priest of Aldington, who was subsequently executed' sends Crumwell two gold crowns for having expedited his pardon. *

The Canterbury monks also professed themselves very ready to serve the king in any way, if he would only pass over their connection with the "Maid of Kent." They even were willing, as Cranmer, then on his visitation there, writes, to offer some substantial sum of money. "Only a few," he says, "consented to these revelations, almost all being Dr. Bocking's novices." The prior, a man of no malice, "has been touched by this matter. They desire my mediation and I think they will offer £200 or £300 for their pardon. The monastery," he adds, "is not 'aforehand' but in debt, except the church ornaments and plate." † Edward Thwaites, whose guilt consisted in his belief in the nun and in having printed a small volume with an account of her early life, purchased "his pardon for 1,000 marks," ‡ and subsequently bishop Fisher had to pay £300 for his share in the matter.

On Saturday, February 21st, 1534, the bill of attainder "concerning the condign punishment of Elizabeth Barton, the hypocrite nun, commonly called the holy maid of Kent," was brought into the Lords

* Calendar, vi., No. 1666. † *Ibid.*, No. 1519.

‡ "Which (£300) was one whole year's revenue of his bishoprick." B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152, f. 49.

and read the first time.* At this sitting and throughout the proceedings during the passage of the bill the lay lords far outnumbered the lords spiritual. The various steps were taken between the date of its introduction and the 12th of March, when it was read for the fourth time and accepted by the house. The accused had apparently been condemned unheard, since on March 6th, at the third reading of the attainder, the lords "thought proper to inquire whether it would accord with the king's wishes *(cum Regio animo quadrare potest)* that Sir Thomas More and the others named in the said bill (except the bishop of Rochester, now very ill, whose answer is known through his letters) should be summoned before the lords to the Star chamber in order to say what they can for themselves."

It has been said that the parties attainted "were not able to disprove a single article of the act." For such a statement there is no warrant. It is by no means easy to say what they could have done had they been allowed. "They were all attainted of high treason, and condemned without any answer making for themselves," as an old writer asserts.† And in this statement, history bears him out. It is also frequently stated that the offences of the nun and her associates were unquestionably treasons, and that "they received a fate most necessary and most deserved." The specific purposes,

* "Lords' Journals," p. 68.

† B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152., f. 49.

pronounced by the statute of Edward I. to be traitorous were war or the king's death. There is not a shadow of evidence to connect Elizabeth Barton with any overt act against the king, and the time had not come when treason could be construed from words or beliefs. "Her denunciations," writes Amos, "would appear to have had reference to a special providence, such as Henry had put in the heads of his subjects, when he represented that the loss of his children by queen Catherine plainly showed that heaven was opposed to his marriage with her. The nun's revelations had chiefly regard to the king's future and contingent conduct, warning him of what he might incur or avoid and they had been refuted by events that had occurred. . . .

"Lord Coke lays it down in two of his works that the offences of the nun of Kent and her confederates were not treason. In his third Institute, in his memorable commentary on the words in the statute of treasons *per overt fait* he has this note: 'See 25 Henry VIII., c. 12. Elizabeth Barton and others attainted by parliament for divers words and conspiracies, which being not within this act without an *overt act* they could not be attainted by common law.' And in his fourth Institute he writes: 'And where, by order of law, a man cannot be attainted of high treason unless the offence be, in law, high treason, he ought not to be attainted by general words of high treason by authority of parliament (as

sometime hath been used); but the high treason ought to be specifically expressed, seeing that the court of parliament is the highest and most honourable court of justice, and ought to give example to inferior courts.' Lord Coke's marginal note to which passage is: '25 Henry VIII., c. 12, Eliz. Barton and others.'" *

The nun and her companions were condemned, therefore, by a tribunal which had not heard them in their defence. In the very bill reference is made for the truth of the facts to examinations not before the parliament, but before the king's council. The books and writings had been "seen and examined by the king's most honourable council," and the matters "confessed plainly before the king's most honourable council," as the bill of attainder declared. The tribunal that decided the case was not that which had examined and the attainted persons, though at hand, were not heard for themselves.

"It remains to be noticed," writes Amos, "that the nun and her accomplices were doubly punished, for, previous to their attainders, they had been exposed on a platform at Paul's cross, by the side of the pulpit; and when the sermon was over they were compelled, one by one, to deliver their 'bills' expressive of penitence for having offended God and the king to the preacher, who read them aloud to the surrounding crowd; further punishment, it is conceived, in the case of the nun herself, if not also

* Amos, "Statutes H. VIII.," p. 44.

of her accomplices, was neither necessary nor deserved ; and it may be thought that they were all put to death, even upon the showing of the indictment, by retrospective law." *

On May 5th, 1534, Elizabeth Barton and her companions were executed under this unjust act of attainder at Tyburn. Father Thomas Bourchier, an English Franciscan Observant, declares that the lives of his two brethren, Fathers Risby and Rich, were twice offered to them if they would accept Henry as supreme head of the English Church.† What was done to the Franciscans would in all probability have been done in the case of those who suffered with them, Dr. Bocking and father Dering, the two monks of the Benedictine monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury, and the two secular priests, Richard Masters and Henry Gold. It is needless to say that the offer was rejected. The character of their deaths may be estimated accordingly.

* "Statutes H. VIII.," p. 45.

† "Hist. Ecc. de Martyrio FF. Ord. Min.," 1583. Bourchier is an authority. He took the Franciscan habit at Greenwich about 1557 upon the restoration of the order by queen Mary. He would thus have known some of the old Franciscan brethren of Fathers Rich and Risby.

Franciscan Observant Friar.

CHAPTER V.

THE FRIARS OBSERVANT.

THE session of Parliament, which commenced in January, 1534, was chiefly occupied in framing measures against the exercise of papal authority in England. The Imperial ambassador, Chapuys, always well informed as to the acts and intentions of Henry, writing the following month to Charles V. says that the commons had taken away all authority from the Holy See, and given to the crown power to nominate to vacant bishoprics. He adds that "the king is very covetous of the goods of the church, which he already considers as his patrimony."* Before Easter he again writes that the lords, "to the great regret of good men, who were in a minority," had been obliged, "owing to the threats and practices of the king," to ratify these enactments of the lower house.†

* Calendar, vii., No. 171. Feb. 11, 1534.

† *Ibid.*, No. 373. In speaking of the Parliament of 1536 it will be necessary to show what these "threats and practices" were. We may here note that Bishop Tunstal, of Durham was prevented attending parliament by positive orders from Crumwell and the King.

Amongst other provisions, made in this parliament for cutting off England from the ancient jurisdiction of Rome, was the transfer of papal authority over the religious houses to the crown. The power of archbishops and bishops to visit and control the monasteries and convents, situated within the limits of their individual dioceses, had long been a subject of debate. Its exercise had often given rise to difficulties and dissensions, which were settled only by recourse to the supreme authority of the Holy See. At all times, however, except in the case of the comparatively few exempt monasteries and of the various orders of friars and others associated in congregations extending beyond the limits of the country and directed by foreign superiors, the episcopal power of visitation was exercised at regular periods. The bishop or his officers also directed the canonical elections.

Henry had now, in defiance of the laws of the Church, taken Anne Boleyn publicly as his queen. This step necessitated a policy of revolt against papal jurisdiction. It might have been supposed, that the authority over exempt monasteries would now have passed to the bishops of the country. On the contrary, it was specially enacted that neither archbishop nor bishop, "nor any other person or persons," should have power to "visit or vex" the religious houses, but that the management of all things concerning them should be left to the king

and such as he should appoint. At this time the greatest uncertainty existed as to the extent of the royal prerogatives in matters ecclesiastical and spiritual.* Ecclesiastics were warned to attempt nothing except at their peril. This perplexity prevented freedom of discussion and enforced passive obedience to the royal will. The exemption of the religious bodies from episcopal control, however, while it appeared to shield them from unnecessary interference, in reality veiled a deep design against their liberties and existence. The removal of all matters concerning the regular orders from the bishops to the king in his court of chancery was the first step towards their ultimate destruction.

At the same time the pulpit was strictly guarded and the Easter sermons of 1534, were directed as far as could be against the pope and his authority.† The definite sentence of the Holy See against the divorce finally forced the king, although as it appears most reluctantly, to widen the breach between England and Rome. He had to make his choice between dutiful submission and active retaliation. The Imperial ambassador, in the April of this year, writes that after the news of the sentence, the king

* The bishops in their uncertainty took out royal licenses for the execution of their episcopal functions. Wake, "State of Church," p. 557.

† Calendar, vii., No. 464.

"commanded the preachers for Easter to say the worst they possibly could against the pope, in which they have acquitted themselves desperately, saying the most outrageous and abominable things in the world. He also ordered that the statutes made in parliament, which he had suspended and reserved *in pectore* till St. John's day, should be immediately published."*

Somewhat later Cranmer, acting no doubt under Crumwell's orders to keep a check on pulpit utterances, had recourse to the novel expedient of revoking all preaching licenses throughout his diocese. He further directed all the bishops of his province to do the same, and this restriction was maintained in force for a year. Cranmer, in the opinion of Chapuys, had now been established by Henry as an English antipope. He "had begun to exercise his antipapality, making bulls for three bishoprics and consecrating" by virtue of his own authority. † Still, at this moment, on account of the share he had taken in the divorce, the archbishop was the most unpopular man in the country. When he held a visitation at Canterbury in the autumn, his very life was supposed to be in danger and he had to seek protection from the government during his stay in his own cathedral city. ‡ As an example, no doubt, "Dan William Winchelsea," a monk of St.

* Calendar, vii., No. 469. April 12.

† *Ibid.*, No. 530.

‡ Dixon, "Hist. of Ch. of Eng.," i., p. 171. Hook's "Lives," v., p 478.

Augustine's abbey there, was committed to prison. He had turned the archbishop to ridicule among his brethren in a place called "the sporte or Little Joy, between the peals of evensong." His special offence was that he had laughed at Cranmer and his "new learning," calling him "a fool archbishop." *

To carry out his designs, it became necessary for Henry to deal sternly and at once with the religious orders. They and the friars were not so easily controlled as the general body of English ecclesiastics. From the ranks of the friars in particular came most of the popular preachers of the day and their utterances were more difficult to check than those of the clergy, whose oratory had been restrained by the directions of the archbishop. Moreover, as they were possessed of no personal and very little corporate property the fear and threat of confiscation had not the same terrors for them as for the beneficed clergy.† Other restraining influences, therefore, had to be brought to bear upon them.

Of the whole body of the clergy, however, none withstood the policy of Henry with greater fearlessness and pertinacity of purpose than the Franciscan Observants. ‡ Two of these friars were implicated

* Calendar, vii., No. 1608.

† *Ibid.*, Preface, xxviii.

‡ Sanders, "Schism," Lewis' trans. p. 112. The Observant friars were a reformed branch of the great Franciscan order. They were instituted about 1400 by St. Bernardine of Sienna, and confirmed by the Council of Constance in 1414, and afterwards by Eugenius IV. and other popes. King Edward IV. is said to have brought

with the "Holy maid of Kent." As partakers of her unjust sentence they were executed at Tyburn a fortnight after Easter, 1534. Death, however, had seemingly no terrors for men, who had fled from the pleasures of life as they had. "Secluded from the commerce and pleasures of the world," writes the historian Lingard, "they felt fewer temptations to sacrifice their conscience to the commands of their sovereign, and seemed more eager to court the crown than to flee from the pains of martyrdom."*

There were six monasteries of these Franciscan Observants in England. Of these, none bore a higher character for discipline and regularity than that of Greenwich. In 1513 Henry VIII. himself had written more than once to the pope, Leo. X., in their favour. He declares that towards them he has the most deep, devoted affection. So much does he admire their holiness of life that he finds it quite impossible to describe their merits as they deserve. They present an ideal of christian poverty, sincerity and charity; their lives are devoted to fasting, watching, prayer; and they are occupied in "hard toil by night and day" to win sinners back to God.† The convent had been placed by Henry VII. at

them to England. Tanner, however, says, "I find no account of their being here till king Henry VII. built two or three houses for them." *Vide* "Monasticon," vi., p. 1504.

* Lingard, "Hist.," vi., p. 285.

† Ellis, "Orig. Letters," Third Ser. i., p. 165. Henry VIII. to Leo X., March 12, 1513. From B. Mus. Vatic. Transcripts, Vol. xxxvii., f. 17.

Greenwich, near to the court, and queen Catherine had chosen one of the brethren, the fearless and saintly friar Forest, as her confessor.*

From the first, as a body, they had taken the part of the unfortunate and injured queen and maintained the injustice and illegality of the pretended divorce. In this, indeed, they had been in reality only the exponents of the popular judgment on the question. When, for instance, Dr. George Browne,† the prior of the Augustinian friars in London, in a sermon at Easter, 1533, proclaimed Anne Boleyn queen and called on all to pray for her, his audience rose in a body and left the church. So high did the feeling run, that the lord mayor was commanded, as Chapuys tells his master, to see that no such a demonstration of the popular view was again attempted. The city companies were consequently peremptorily ordered to maintain silence altogether on the question and to restrain their apprentices from murmuring against the elevation of the king's mistress to his throne.‡

The friars Observant of Greenwich were not so easily silenced. "They, indeed," writes Sanders,

* Queen Catherine, when the court was at Greenwich, is said to have risen always at midnight to be present at the friars' matins. "Collect Anglo-Min.," p. 216.

† Dr. George Browne, an Augustinian friar, was supposed to have united Henry and Anne in the private marriage, which took place probably Jan. 25, 1533. *Cf.* Gairdner, Preface, Vol. vi., p. xxi.

‡ Calendar, vi., No. 391.

"both in public disputations and in their sermons, most earnestly maintained that the marriage of Catherine was good and lawful." Yet even here, among so many good, there were not wanting some to go with the stream. Here, as in so many religious houses at this period, Crumwell found a spy to report to him the dispositions and intentions of the cloistered religious. In this case a lay brother, Richard Lyst, afterwards rewarded for his services by a place at Cambridge,* was Crumwell's agent, and he kept him informed as to the feelings and doings of his brethren. Early in February, 1533, he writes to his employer that he considers the discipline of his monastery altogether too severe. The religious are corrected and "punished for nothing" and many of their fathers show themselves much against the king. Of these the chief and leading spirits are Fathers Peto, Elstow, and Forest. Above the rest he thinks friar Forest most to be blamed in the matter, because the king had always shown him special kindness. Only the day before (Monday, February 3rd) Henry had conversed with him in private for more than half an hour, and had "sent him some beef from his own table."†

A fortnight later, the same discontented lay brother tells Crumwell that Forest had returned from another interview with the king. In it, he says, Henry had taken him to task for the opposition of the Greenwich friars to the policy pursued in regard to the

* Calendar, vi., No. 1264. † *Ibid.*, vi., No. 116.

divorce, and which Lyst had reported to his majesty. Forest had told his brethren in chapter how angry the king was with all of them, and in particular with himself. "He said," continues Crumwell's correspondent, "that he will try and get the king to make you give up all the letters against him that I or others have written." He concludes by asking Crumwell to destroy all such letters from him, as he intends himself to write a long "pystyll" to the friar containing all his faults. "Since you rebuked him," he adds, "about his indiscreet words as to yourself I told you about, he will not speak to me."* The intended letter to Forest was written,† but to the intense disgust of Lyst the friar took no notice of it.‡

The informing lay brother quite thought that "the suspect death of brother Raynscroftys" would prevent "ours preaching against the king."§ Early in May, however, friar Peto, a man "of good house and family," and one specially accused by Lyst of taking a leading part against the king's designs, had

* Calendar, Vol. vii., No. 168.

† *Ibid.*, No. 334. April 12.

‡ This Richard Lyst says in another letter (R. O. Crumwell Corr., Vol. xxiv., No. 42) that he was "of old my lord cardinal's servant." He "has dreadful dreams three or four nights each week," and thinks "he could serve God better in another state than" as he is, and "get rid of" his trouble. He adds, "The information I sent you about friar Forest deserves support." A few months after he writes as a student in "first orders" from Clare Hall, Cambridge, saying he intends to be a "secular priest."

§ Calendar, vii., No. 168.

to preach before Henry.* He did not hesitate to speak his mind boldly. The story of this sermon and its sequel is told by the historian John Stow.†

"The first that openly resisted or reprehended the king touching his marriage with Anne Boleyn was one friar Peto, a simple man, yet very devout, of the order of Observants: this man, preaching at Greenwich upon the two-and-twentieth chapter of the third Book of Kings, viz., the last part of the story of Ahab, saying, 'even where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, even there shall the dogs lick thy blood also, O king,' and therewithall spoke of the lying prophets who abused the king, and 'I am,' quoth he, 'that Micheas whom thou wilt hate, because I must tell thee truly that this marriage is unlawful. I know I shall eat the bread of affliction and drink the water of sorrow, yet because our Lord hath put it into my mouth, I must speake it.' And when he had strongly inveighed against the king's second marriage to dissuade him from it, he also said, 'There are many other preachers, yea too many, which preach and persuade thee otherwise, feeding thy folly and frail affections upon hope of their own worldly promotion, and by that means they betray thy soul, thy honour, and posterity to obtain fat benefices, to become rich abbots, and get episcopal jurisdiction and other ecclesiastical

* N. Harpsfield, "The Pretended Divorce," Camden Society, p. 203.

† Stow, Annals, ed. 1615, p. 561.

dignities. These, I say, are the four hundred prophets who in the spirit of lying seek to deceive you; but take good heed lest, being seduced, you find Ahab's punishment, which was to have his blood licked up by the dogs.' "*

The same historian then relates the sequel of this bold denunciation. "The king," he says, "being thus reproved, endured it patiently and did no violence to Peto, but the next Sunday being the eighth* of May, Dr. Curwin† preached in the same place, who sharply reprehended Peto and his preaching, and called him

* Nich. Harpsfield, *ut sup.*, gives the same account, and adds: "What moved this father to speak these words God knoweth, but that so it came to pass a very strange event did afterwards show." He then goes on to relate the well-known incident of Henry's coffin bursting whilst deposited for the night in the desecrated walls of Sion monastery and of the black dog which was seen to lick up the blood. "This chance," he says, "one William Consett reported, saying he was there present, and with much ado drove away the said dog." The writer of a MS. (early seventeenth century writing; B. Mus. Sloane MS., 2495, f. 16) says, he was told this same fact from the plumber "and one William Grevill, who was present."

† Stow, p. 559, says the sermon was on May 28. Probably both dates are wrong, as neither the 8th nor 28th was a Sunday in any year about this time. May 18th, however, was a Sunday in 1533.

‡ Curwin, or as he is called in the episcopal registers of the diocese of Hereford, "Mgr. Hugo Coren, LL.D.," was a canon of Hereford. On the death of bishop Fox he was appointed by Cranmer to administer the diocese *sede vacante* (*vide* his register). Bonner, as elect of Hereford, appointed him his commissary. Under Fox, he had held the post of Vicar general. He was made dean of Hereford in 1541, archbishop of Dublin in 1555, and in 1567 translated by Elizabeth to the see of Oxford.

dog, slanderer, base, beggarly friar, closeman, rebel, and traitor, saying that no subject should speak so audaciously to princes. . . . He then, supposing to have utterly suppressed Peto and his partakers, lifted up his voice and said: 'I speak to thee, Peto, who makest thyself Micheas, that thou mayest speak evil of kings, but now thou art not to be found, being fled for fear and shame as being unable to answer my arguments.' And whilst he thus spoke there was one Elstow, a fellow friar to Peto, standing in the rood loft, who, with a bold voice, said to Dr. Curwin: 'Good sir, you know that father Peto, as he was commanded, is now gone to a provincial council held at Canterbury, and not fled for fear of you, for to-morrow he will return again. In the meantime I am here as another Micheas, and will lay down my life to prove all those things true which he hath taught out of the holy scripture. And to this combat I challenge you before God and all equal judges. Even unto thee, Curwin, I speak, who art one of the four hundred prophets into whom the spirit of lying is entered, and seekest by adultery to establish succession, betraying the king unto endless perdition, more for thy own vain glory and hope of promotion than for discharge of your clogged conscience and the king's salvation.' "

The scene can be better imagined than described. Henry himself had attended again at the church of the Greenwich Observants to witness the discomfiture of the bold preacher of the previous

Sunday. In the absence of friar Peto, Dr. Curwin calculated to carry his audience with him by means of his vigorous denunciations. The tables were turned when another of the Greenwich brethren leaned over from the rood, and not alone defended his absent brother, but vehemently accused Curwin himself of acting as he did through hopes of preferment. "This Elstow," continues the chronicler, "waxed hot* and spake very earnestly, so that they could not make him cease his speech until the king himself bade him hold his peace."†

The following day, as the king had directed, the two friars Peto and Elstow were brought before the council, when Elstow again boldly replied to the threats of Henry Bourchier, earl of Essex. After the lords had "rebuked them, the E. of Essex told

* After relating Elstow's answer to "this great Golias bragge," Harpsfield (*ut sup.*, p. 204) says: "Many other things he would have then spoken, and much ado there was to stay him. At the hearing of this the king was cast into a great choler and in a great heat commanded that these friars should be conveyed thither where he should never hear more of them." The author says he heard the whole account from Elstow himself.

† Harpsfield (*ut sup.*) gives much the same account. He says that Dr. Curwin preached on Palm Sunday, "the next Sunday," by the king's order. "But lord," he continues, "what a stir that Currante made against that poor friar, being absent, and what nick-names he gave him! At length, as though he had now full conquered him, he began to triumph and insult upon him, crying out 'Where is miser and micher Micheas? Where doth he now micher? He is run away for that he would not hear what should be said unto him. Belike he is somewhat lurking and musing with himself by what means he may honestly recant.' "

them, that they had deserved to be put into a sack and cast into the Thames. Whereunto Elstow, smiling, said, 'Threaten these things to rich and dainty folk who are clothed in purple, fare delicately, and have their chiefest hope in this world, for we esteem them not, but are joyful that for the discharge of our duties we are driven hence. With thanks to God we know the way to heaven, to be as ready by water as by land, and, therefore, we care not which way we go.'"* The two friars, Peto and Elstow, apparently escaped with a reprimand and the punishment of exile from England.

Meanwhile, the immediate effect of father Peto's vigorous denunciation of Henry's marriage with Anne was the solemn declaration of archbishop Cranmer, in presence of Thomas Crumwell and others, that the union was true and valid.† The king, too, pressed on his measures against the pope. He secured for himself, also, powers to deal vigorously and summarily with all religious, who should dare to set their faces against his vicious inclinations or oppose his defection from the ancient traditions of the Catholic faith. The Greenwich Observant fathers had been well acquainted with the unfortunate queen Catherine. Their convent joined on to the royal palace, and they had thus been brought into close contact both with the king and queen. From the days of Henry VII. they had acted as chaplains and confidential advisers to the court when at

* Stow, *ut supra*. † Calendar, vi. Preface, xxi. (May 28th)

Greenwich. The friars, doubtlessly, had experienced many an act of kindness from Catherine and they were certainly among the first and foremost of her defenders, as they were the boldest to condemn the injustice of Henry's repudiation of his wife.

Anne, on the other hand, at this time all powerful, had no cause to look upon them with favour. She would certainly have urged the king to proceed without delay and by vigorous measures to secure their submission to his wishes in her regard. Her position, as she knew well, depended altogether upon the maintenance of the quarrel between England and Rome; and this, again, upon the possibility of repressing the yearning of the nation at large for reunion with Christendom and justice to Catherine. For this purpose the voices, which were bold enough to blame the king's unlawful union and protest against the rejection of papal authority, must be stifled at all costs. Chapuys calls Anne Boleyn "the cause and principal wet nurse of heresy."* The necessity of her case, and her determination at all hazards to maintain her position, obliged her to urge the king on to further hostile and aggressive measures against the Holy See and her hated rival. Queen Catherine was suspected of having procured from Rome the excommunication which was posted at this time on the doors of the church at Dunkirk.†

* Chapuys to Chas. V. See Friedmann's "Anne Boleyn," i., p. 235.

† Stow, "Annales," ed. 1604, p. 960.

Her servants and faithful attendants were dismissed and a strict watch was set over her dwelling at Bugden. Whilst this was being done two Observant friars, named Payn and Cornelius, were found to have secretly visited the fallen queen.

This was considered a great matter, especially as the two visitors had been "subtely conveyed thence." Crumwell's spies tracked them to Ware and finally arrested them in London, notwithstanding "many wiles and cautells by them invented to escape." They were brought before the minister. "Upon examination there was nothing that could be gathered of any moment or great importance;" but Crumwell, "entering on further communication," reported to the king that he "found one of them a very seditious person, and so committed him to ward." He added: "It is undoubted that they have intended and would confess some great matter, if they might be examined as they ought to be—that is, by pains;"* or, in plain English, by torture on the rack. The Greenwich Observants had, it seems, some connection with these two friars. The warden had specially requested to have the punishment of them if any were required; and father Peto, who had spoken so boldly about the

* Calendar, vi., No. 887. The date ascribed by Mr. Froude, ii., p. 163, is an instance of his habitual disregard of accuracy even in small matters. He says this took place "about the end of October, or the beginning of November," whereas the document is plainly dated July 23rd.

king's marriage, and was now beyond the seas, was known to have written to Hugh Payn, one of the two. In Crumwell's mind, at least, they were in some way connected with fathers Rich and Risby, two of their brethren from the houses of Richmond and Canterbury, who were regarded as among the chief counsellors and adherents of the Holy maid of Kent. In his "Remembrances" at this period he notes, "touching friar Risby's examination;—of the letter sent by Peto to Payn the friar."* As far as can be ascertained, nothing was proved against the two Observants. They must, however, have been released for we meet with Hugh Payn later on in this same year, when he again comes within reach of Crumwell's power.

By the spring of 1534 events had progressed rapidly. Parliament, under the skilful management of Crumwell, had proved itself so pliant to Henry's will that the king could contemplate a final move against the unbending Greenwich friars. Already according to one authority,† friar Forest, who five

* *Ibid.*, No. 1370. This letter, see *ibid.*, No. 836.

† Bouchier, "Hist. Eccl. de Mart. Fratrum," 1583. Mr. Gairdner places friar Forest's letters in his Calendar, Vol. vii., Nos. 129 to 134, but notes that there is no sign of Forest's imprisonment at this date, although the "complaints of friar Lyst (Vol. vi., Nos. 168, 334, 512) may have led to his imprisonment." Stowe, in his Chronicle (ed. 1580), says, 1532, "The 28 of May friar Forest was put in prison for contrarying the preacher before the king." In the list of Observants published in Mr. Gairdner's Calendar, Vol. vii., No. 1607, is "John Foreste is there (London) in prison." Perhaps the most conclusive proof that he was probably in prison at this time is that we hear no

years later died a martyr's death, was lodged in prison, although not so closely watched as to be unable to communicate by letter with Catherine and others. To the queen he wrote, begging her prayers, and telling her not to grieve for his fate. At the age of sixty-four he hoped to be constant, and as he believed he had only three days to live he sent her his rosary.* Again, in answer to a note from one of Catherine's ladies, who expressed the distress the queen felt for the treatment her old confessor was experiencing in prison, he begged her to tell Catherine that this want of fortitude was not what he had tried to teach her. As for himself, he said he had only to break his faith to save his life, and he concluded by urging her to accept her sufferings for Christ's sake.† Besides friar Forest, there were in prison at this time two other Observants, friar Rich the warden of Richmond, and friar Risby the warden of Canterbury, both charged in connection with the maid of Kent. Their sufferings and death have been spoken of in the last chapter.

At the beginning of the year 1534 one of the spies, whom Crumwell found to do his work among the religious of the monasteries and convents, wrote to claim his reward. He had evidently been helping the renegade lay-brother, Richard Lyst, in defaming

more about him. Crumwell's "remembrances" are silent about this formidable opponent.

* Calendar, vii., No. 130.

† *Ibid.*, No. 132.

the brethren of his monastery and carrying stories to Crumwell adverse to the Franciscan Observants. His suggestion strikes the reader as being ingenious as well as audacious. Friar John Laurence, as he is called, asks nothing less than to be made superior, either in the place of father Rich or father Risby, whom, no doubt, the stories he has related to Crumwell have helped to their present resting place. His reason for wishing to secure his promotion at once is not less singular than the request. "If I return as I am," he says, "I shall be so handled amongst them that I shall not be able to serve you or the king."*

The Greenwich branch of the Franciscan Observants was not the only one, which produced men with the courage of their convictions. On Passion Sunday, March 22nd, 1534, a certain Robert Cooke, of Rye, was ordered to abjure publicly, in the cathedral church of Winchester, certain heresies he had maintained about the Blessed Sacrament. On that occasion friar Pecock, warden of the Observant convent of Franciscan friars at Southampton, was the preacher. He seized the opportunity to speak earnestly of this and "other dampned heresies." He eloquently exhorted the people to stand steadfast even to death in their ancient faith and practice. He then related to his audience the story of St. Maurice, who refused to execute his prince's commands when they were contrary to the law of God;

* *Ibid.*, No. 139.

but rather than resist his authority he preferred to suffer martyrdom. The friar went on to exhort the people to live and die animated by the same spirit. "Here are many hearers," he continued, "and they not all of one capacity. Some there be that understand me and some peradventure that understand me not, but otherwise do take me and shall report me, that I do speak my mind." He then lamented the diversity of opinions that existed in England, especially as regarded the pope. Some, he said, declared that St. Peter had no more power given him by God than the other apostles, and others that the pope had no more power than a bishop of any other diocese, whilst others again taught that as a bishop was no more than a simple priest, "so, consequently, the pope had no more power than a simple curate." To prove this, he continued, people bought all kinds of books that were not to be believed. Then, taking up a volume which was beside him in the pulpit, he read to his audience five or six authorities on the Primacy of St. Peter and translated the passages into English.*

As friar Pecock had foreseen, such bold and undisguised speaking was not allowed to pass without being reported to Crumwell. This was done almost immediately, and at once John Perchard, the mayor of Southampton, with others were directed to seize the preacher's person and convey him to London. For this purpose they went

* *Ibid.*, No. 449.

to the convent of the Franciscan Observants at Southampton on the Wednesday in Easter week; but found that the friar was still absent on his preaching rounds.* They left orders for his immediate return, and a few days later they were able to send him under guard to London that Crumwell might himself examine into the matter. At the same time the mayor and his coadjutor wrote to "beg all favour unto Pecock, for since his being here he has been of very good behaviour and keeps his convent in good order."† These testimonies to the friar's worth apparently obtained his release, as he is found at Southampton again a few months later.

The better to carry out his wishes in regard to the various orders of friars, Henry conceived the ingenious plan of appointing over them a superior upon whose faithful subservience to himself he could depend. More than two years previously, in the beginning of 1532, the king had endeavoured, by writing to the general of the friars Minor, to obtain the appointment of some superiors in England more amenable and less uncompromising than fathers Elstow, Peto and Forest. He had, in fact, named the friar he would desire to see superior of the English Observants. The general, however, being unable to spare that father, another was sent as commissary to inquire into matters.‡ When friars Elstow and Peto had

* *Ibid.*, Nos. 448-450.

† *Ibid.*, Nos. 472-3.

‡ *Ibid.*, v., No. 715. January 13, 1532. Friar Paul Parmensis, general of Minorites to Henry VIII.

incurred the active hostility of Cromwell and the king every means was taken to influence the elections of the Observants, so as to destroy the authority of these unbending friars. Moreover, as Chapuys writes to Charles V., "they have been told that the king has sent to Rome for a commission to try them, to the provincial of the 'broad-sleeved order'—the Augustinian hermits—which would be an insult" to the whole body. Both Catherine and the Observants themselves asked the Imperial ambassador to protest at Rome against any such commission, and Chapuys caused the Nuncio also to write* to the same effect. No appointment was made, but Henry did not forget his purpose, which, as he conceived, would be the best method of controlling the friars. The commissary of the general, Johan de la Haye, apparently foresaw what would happen. On the one hand, he wrote to the king saying he regretted not being able to do what he wanted as to the deprivation of certain obnoxious fathers from their offices.† On the other hand, he begged his English brethren to be prudent lest the king should carry out his intended appointment, "for it would be a great reproof to have a stranger at the head."‡

By 1534 Henry's quarrel with the pope had reached its height, and the severance of the Church in England from its ancient dependence on Rome was complete. There remained then no further obstacle to the king's dealing according to his royal pleasure

* *Ibid.*, No. 989. † *Ibid.*, No. 1358. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 1371.

with the friars. They were, with the rest of the Church in England, separated from their natural connection with their supreme authority. To effect the separation Crumwell and his master selected two worthy instruments. One was John Hilsey, a Dominican friar, afterwards made successor to the blessed John Fisher in the see of Rochester, and the other Dr. George Brown, a prior of the Augustinian hermits and subsequently, for his services to the king and his minister, created archbishop of Dublin.* Of their appointment Chapuys wrote, in April, 1534, to his Imperial master:—"The king has set in train the sovereignty to which he pretends over the English Church, and has appointed a Jacobin and an Augustinian provincials and grand visitors." Both of these instruments of the royal tyranny were subsequently singled out by the "Pilgrims of Grace" as deserving instant deprivation and condign punishment.

The two "grand visitors" were despatched with a full commission† to the various orders of friars in the spring of 1534. Their instructions were precise and intended to gauge the feeling of the friars very thoroughly. The members of every convent or friary

* "On Sunday last," says Chapuys (1535), "an Augustinian friar (Dr. George Brown), who has been appointed by the king general of all the mendicant orders in reward for having married the king and the lady Anne, preached. . . . The language is so abominable that it is clear it must have been prompted by the king or Crumwell, who makes the said monk his right hand man in all things unlawful."

† Calendar, vii., No. 587 (18).

in England were to be assembled in their chapter houses and examined separately concerning their faith and obedience to Henry. The oath of allegiance to Anne Boleyn was to be administered to them, and they were to be bound to swear solemnly that they would preach and persuade the people, to accept the royal supremacy, to confess that the bishop of Rome had no more power than any other bishop and to call him Pope no longer. Further, the sermons of each preacher were to be carefully examined, and if not orthodox they were to be burned. Every friar was to be strictly enjoined to commend the king as head of the Church, the queen, the archbishop of Canterbury and the clergy to the prayers of the faithful. Lastly, each house was "to be obliged to show its gold, silver and other moveable goods, and deliver an inventory of them," and to take a common oath, sealed with the convent seal, to observe the above orders.*

From the 17th to the 20th of April, Hilsey and Brown were occupied at the various friaries of London and the neighbourhood. They then proceeded to visit others in the southern parts of England. The very fact of these unusual visitations seems to have suggested to the minds of some ingenious, but unscrupulous, ecclesiastics a method of obtaining money from monasteries and convents by pretending a commission to visit and correct them. A priest, for example, named James Billingford, who held a

* *Ibid.*, 590.

benefice in Suffolk, called in this way at most of the abbeys and priories of Warwickshire, Oxford, and Northampton. He extorted much money from the helpless inmates by pretending to be queen Anne's chaplain and thus possessed of much influence to injure or protect the religious, according to the report he should make concerning them. At the end of April, he visited a priory near Banbury and demanded from the prior £5 in money and his best gelding, threatening if he did not get what he asked he would have him deposed from his office before the coming Whitsuntide. The prior was poor and could scarcely spare the noble which he offered to him. For so small an offering, he was abused and received a threatening letter. Anthony Coope, a neighbouring gentleman, who relates the story to Crumwell, took the case up and, although the adventurer lay hid for a few days, he was subsequently taken and lodged in Lincoln gaol. The priest's servant was placed in the stocks along with his master. *

Ten days later, Crumwell's correspondent on this matter writes an account of the priest's examination. He was a worthless ecclesiastic, who, according to his own tale, had not said his mass nor read his breviary for some months. He was fond of "dicing and carding" and had, by his ingenious pretence of being a visitor, extracted as black mail large sums of money and many horses from the religious houses he had thus far attempted. He was, however, a

* *Ibid.*, No. 700. May. 2.

clever villain, for he trusted now to purchase his liberty and, perhaps, more than that by accusing the monks he had robbed of being enemies of the king and his present policy. "He says," writes Anthony Coope, "that the king has no such mortal enemies as the abbots and priors; on which I straightly examined him to know the names of such. He mentioned the name of the abbot of Bittlesden, Bucks, as appears in his bill, which he will show the council when he comes up; and to confort him therein, I told him that if it were true it will purchase him the king's favour. He says this was always his intent, but I think, if he had not been thereto enforced, he would never have had it known that he had been near any of these abbeys. It appears, also, that he said he had a commission to view the abbeys as he has done."*

The depositions against James Billingford are of considerable interest. They show the life of terror led by the religious and especially by the nuns at this period and also on what kind of testimony the charges made against the monks of furnishing money to aid rebellion really rested. One witness testifies that the amateur visitor declared at Derley abbey, in the presence of the abbot Thomas, a great matter. It was nothing less than that he knew that "one coat of religion," the Black monks (Benedictines) had gathered £160,000 to make an insurrection against the king, which money had

* Calendar, vii., No. 641. May 11.

been shipped to the Pope from Southampton in wool packs. The same day he went to the nunnery at Derby. The prioress was from home, but he insisted on going all over the house. He asked one of the sisters, Joan More, the age of the prioress and the number of the nuns, and "took a view of their grain to the great fear of the sisters." A third witness deposed, that he sometimes went under the name of Kettilbye, and imitated a young man "after the scholars' fashion." The servant of the impostor had also told another witness that his master was a kinsman of queen Anne and was in the service of Thomas Crumwell, so that "I was to take care how I meddled with him."*

Friar Pecock, the warden of the Franciscan Observants at Southampton, whose sermon in Winchester cathedral had caused his arrest and examination by Thomas Crumwell, had an experience of the troubles of the visitations the king had set on foot. This case was not unlike that of the convents visited by the priest Billingford, and Pecock was in doubt whether the course he had followed would not draw down upon him once more the anger of Henry and his minister. He consequently wrote at once to Crumwell, to "avoid your and the king's displeasure," and told him what had occurred.

"On the 15th July," he says, "there came to us a father Black friar, and without any authority took the keys from our porter and delivered them to one

* *Ibid.*, viii., No. 81.

of his servants. Then, by ringing the bell, he assembled us in the chapter-house and said he was come as our visitor by the king's authority, and read an instrument under seal, as he said, of my lord of Canterbury, containing a transumpt of the king's letters patent, by which authority was given to Dr. Brown, provincial of the Austin friars, and Dr. Hilsey, provincial of the Black friars, to be visitors. We took him to be Dr. Hilsey ; for when I spoke with him in the town he did not deny it. We were willing to accept him as visitor, but we found by chance by one of his servants that he was not named in the commission, and was not Hilsey. Not knowing what to do, we desired him to show us his authority and he showed us a letter to your mastership so ill-written that I could not read it plainly, under seal, as he said, of Dr. Hilsey ; and knowing that he was a wise father and a good clerk we did not believe it, but begged him to show us the first writing again to see whether Dr. Hilsey had any power to substitute. This he refused, and so we would not let him proceed and he threatened us with the king's displeasure and yours."*

At this period the "reign of terror," which afterwards extended over the entire kingdom during the sway of Thomas Crumwell, had commenced within the walls of the monasteries. It has been shown above, how an official examiner had declared to a prisoner, charged with violence and fraudulently

* *Ilid*, vii., No. 982. July 16.

levying black mail upon abbey and convent, that if he could prove the religious to be the enemies of the king it would "*purchase him the king's favour.*" Lawless men were apparently at this time able to do to the monasteries what violence they pleased. The account of the scenes during an election at Croxton abbey seems almost incredible. Lord Berkeley and his followers on that occasion violently seized a considerable sum of money at the abbey and did much wanton mischief to the monastic property with perfect immunity.* It would appear that on the day before the election Lord Berkeley, Dr. Hewes and forty retainers came to the abbey. Two of the servants took entire possession of the monastery lodgings, seizing the keys and locking the doors. Every retainer of the monastery was expelled by force and in their places others, from among Berkeley's attendants, were appointed. On the morning of the election, when the religious wished to enter their own chapter house, James Berkeley with twelve or thirteen armed men kept them out by their drawn swords, and they were forced to return to the choir and lock themselves in the church.

The night before the election, and even on the day itself, Dr. Hewes and others "persuaded as much as they could unto master Thomas Grene, now abbot, affirming always that there was offered for the same the sum of 500 marks, and unless the now

* *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 17.

abbot would give lord Berkeley the sum of £500 they would make what abbot they chose." The armed men then continued to keep the chapter house shut, until the abbot of Welbeck showed them the king's patent making him the visitor of Croxton. The following day Dr. Hewes again threatened the abbot to deprive him of various benefices unless he consented to give the money demanded, and at last, through fear, he paid them £160, and gave them a bill for a like sum payable in a year.*

He was then further compelled to pay £20 for the expenses of those who had robbed him, and finally, when the retainers departed, "they took with them ten fine pillaghbers, two pair of sheets, one sword and one buckler, and cut several blankets in two for saddle cloths. They took besides out of the choir a book called the *Obit* book, containing a terrier of all lands belonging to the monastery of Croxton and the names of all donors, which book the abbot would not have given for £100."

Dr. Hilsey was occupied in visiting the friaries of the south and west of England till the midsummer of 1534. On June 21st he wrote from Exeter to say that he had found none of those he had so far visited who refused the oath to "be obedient, true, and agreeable to the king's high pleasure and will." He added, "I have found some, however, that have sworn with an evil will and slenderly have taken the

* This was a large sum for those days, and what the abbot had to pay was worth some £4,000 of our money.

oath to be obedient." Of these, he promised Crumwell, he would have more to say on his return.* At this time his attention was specially taken up with watching the proceedings of certain Franciscan Observants. At the commencement of July, he was in pursuit of two of these friars who were endeavouring to escape to the continent from the persecution which had already begun in England. Hilsey followed them through Bristol, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, and at last overtook them at Cardiff, where they were already in prison. In sending them up to London to undergo the usual examination from Crumwell and his officials, he writes :—"You shall perceive more of their crafty fashion. In all places where they come they persuade the people to hold to the bishop of Rome, calling him a Pope and saying that they will die in his cause and never forsake him while they live. They rail at the books set forth *cum privilegio*, calling them heresies, and heretics that set them forth." Then he adds that they have made people laugh at queen Anne's new born child, the princess Elizabeth, telling them that it had been baptized† in hot water, which they ironically declared was not hot enough for her.‡

One of these two friars was Hugh Payn, who not long before had been arrested and put in prison for

* Calendar, vii., No. 869.

† Elizabeth was baptized at Greenwich in the church of the friars Observant.

‡ Calendar, vii., No. 939.

having visited the dethroned queen Catherine at her house at Bugden. The other was Thomas Hayfield and both belonged to the house of Newark. They had narrowly escaped capture in Somerset, to the sheriff of which county the king had sent a special commission for their seizure. At Cardiff, they had almost succeeded in eluding the keen pursuit after them, having arranged with the master of a Breton ship to convey them to Brittany, and were on the point of embarking, disguised in secular dress, when they were taken.* Thomas Lichefield, who had seized them and brought them up to London, in writing to beg that they may be disposed of quickly, as they are lodged too near to the sanctuary of Westminster to be safe, adds, "This bearer will tell you the words one of them spoke of my lady princess." They were quickly placed in prison, from which subsequently they wrote to Henry VIII. to "beg his compassion, being in great pain and sickness."†

The State papers of this period contain various complaints forwarded to Crumwell about the teaching and preaching of these valiant friars. They remained as firmly attached to the ancient faith as they were to the cause of Catherine. One or two of their number, like Lyst, the lay brother who acted as a spy upon the actions of friar Forest, may have given way under the pressure of the threats and promises addressed to them. By becoming the

* *Ibid.*, No. 1020.

† *Ibid.*, No. 1652.

accusers of their brethren they may have hoped to purchase the royal favour by their treachery. Such renegades were, however, the exceptions; as a body the friars remained staunch and fearless in their opposition to the will of the king and his minister. An instance, recorded in a document of this time, reveals to us how the people applauded this attitude, and condemned the weakness of those that yielded. Friar John George of Cambridge was apparently one of the latter sort. His mother, however, was made of sterner stuff, and rated him right roundly for having given in to the influence of the times. She is grieved indeed, she writes to him, to find her son a heretic. It was not for this that he had received his education from the good nuns of Dartford. "And," she continues, "you send me word that you will come over to me this summer, but come not unless you change your condition, or you shall be as welcome 'as water into the sheep.' You shall have God's curse and mine, and never a penny. I had rather give all my goods to the poor than keep you in heresy."*

Above all the rest, the Observants of Greenwich and Richmond were the objects of the special solicitude of Henry and his agents. Rowland Lee, one of the king's chaplains and of late made bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, was selected, together with Thomas Bedyll, clerk of the council, to make the final attempts to influence them. Friar Rich,

* *Ibid.*, No. 939.

the warden of the Richmond friars and his companion, friar Risby of Canterbury, were executed at Tyburn with the holy maid of Kent, on the 20th April, 1534, and very shortly afterwards the two commissioners reported to their employer, Crumwell, their first move in the matter. They had induced the prior and convent of the Carthusians of Sheen, they wrote, to take the required oath. The prior and procurator had been doing their best to win over to the same mind their neighbours, the Observants of Richmond, earnestly exhorting them to bend their minds to the king's wishes. Both the bishop and his coadjutor had also been busy at the same work, holding various conferences with the friars; but, as they are obliged to confess, without any sign of success. In fact, until now they had been in despair of effecting their purpose, but, with the Sheen influence at work, they had some slight shadow of hope that they might finally win the Franciscans to what the king required.*

The next few weeks were occupied in like fruitless efforts to obtain the consent of the equally staunch Carthusians to the oath. It was not, therefore, till Saturday, June 15th, that Lee and Bedyll followed up their attacks upon the Richmond friars. On that day Dr. George Browne, or, as Lee calls him, "the provincial of the Austin friars," delivered to the bishop and his fellow-commissioner Crumwell's orders to proceed at once to conclusions. Armed

* Calendar, vii., No. 622. May 7.

with these letters they betook themselves directly to Richmond, which they reached "between ten and eleven o'clock at night." "In the following morning," as they report to Crumwell, "we had first communication with the warden and one of the seniors, named Sebastian, and after that with the whole convent." At first, although they made use of "all the means and policies" they could devise to obtain the oath and the signatures and convent seal to the "articles" sent by Dr. George Browne, the warden and his faithful friars absolutely refused, "and showed themselves very untoward in that behalf."

They then fell back on another plan. After some argument, they finally persuaded the convent, as a body, to trust the settlement of the matter to the discretion of four of their senior members, "otherwise called discretes," who were to have full power to act in their behalf. Having secured this much, the commissioners arranged that the four friars, to whom the community had entrusted their honour and conscience, should meet them at the house of the Greenwich Observants and should bring with them the convent seal, on Monday, June 17th. "And so they did."

The two commissioners, Lee and Bedyll, arrived at Greenwich somewhat elated at the success of their diplomacy at Richmond. They fortified themselves with the hope that here also they might prevail upon the friars to walk into the same trap.

If they were only pliable and would commit the matter to the judgment of some few of the brethren, it would, in their opinion, serve a double purpose. It would be the means of "avoiding superfluous words and idle reasonings," and in case the "discretes" chosen should refuse their consent to the proposed articles, "it were better after our minds," they say, "to strain a few than a multitude." Their plans came to nothing, for their advice was rejected. The Greenwich Observants absolutely refused to leave a matter of this kind to be settled by a few deputies, saying "that as it concerned particularly every one of their souls, they would answer particularly every man for himself."

The commissioners were thus obliged to discuss the whole matter in public. After a long debate, and after each friar had been privately examined as to his willingness to accept the royal desires, they found that one and all steadily refused to subscribe to the rejection of Papal authority and jurisdiction. The friars declared that the proposed article "was clearly against their profession and the rule of St. Francis."* It was quite in vain that Bedyll and the bishop tried ingeniously to explain away this fatal

* The words of the rule which the friars pointed out to Lee are: "Ad hæc per obedientiam injungo ministris ut petant a domino Papa unum de Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ Cardinalibus, qui sit gubernator, protector et corrector istius fraternitatis, ut semper subditi et subjecti pedibus Sanctæ Ecclesiæ ejusdem stabiles in fide Catholica paupertatem et humilitatem et secundum Evangelium Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, quod firmiter promisimus observemus."

objection. They reasoned that St. Francis had made his rule for Italy and that, of course, the Italian religious would be subject to the papal authority, "as all monks not exempt are under the obedience of the bishop of Canterbury;" but that such a clause in the rule would not apply to England. Secondly, they gravely told the friars that, in their opinion, the chapter they quoted from the rule was a forgery; and, lastly, that neither the Pope, nor St. Francis, nor their rules, vows, oaths or professions "could take away one jot of the obedience they owed to the king by God's laws."

On this last point the visitors expatiated eloquently, and with, what they no doubt considered, great learning; but after all, their words were thrown away. As they lament to Crumwell, "all this reason could not sink into their obstinate heads and worn in custom of obedience to the Pope." They made, however, one last attempt to overcome this constancy. They represented that the two archbishops and most of the bishops of the country, with prelates and learned priests, had subscribed to the declaration that the pope had no authority according to the scriptures *(ex sacris literis)* in England. They urged that it was obvious presumption for them to persist in a refusal, which virtually condemned what so many good and well-instructed ecclesiastics had done. No doubt this argument had been used with fatal effect to secure the adhesion of many, who in their own hearts condemned the doctrine of royal supremacy as con-

trary to Catholic faith; but with the friars Observant it failed, as it subsequently failed with More and Fisher. For, as the baffled visitors write to their master, "all this notwithstanding, their conclusion was they had professed St. Francis' religion, and in the observance thereof they would live and die." "Sorry we be," they conclude, "we cannot bring them to no better frame and order in this behalf, as our faithful minds was to do for the accomplishment of the king's pleasure."*

Henry, foiled in his designs, determined to strike quickly and effectually. As yet, however, there was no law by which these bold and unbending friars, who set his wishes at defiance, could be made to feel the weight of his royal displeasure. No theory of verbal treason had so far been enunciated by means of which the brave Franciscans could be brought within the law and its extreme penalties. Hence there was no means by which they could be made to share in the sharp sufferings and martyrdom with which a similar refusal on the part of the Carthusians was shortly afterwards rewarded. Neither was it illegal for them to refuse, however obstinately, their adherence to articles proposed to them even with the royal authority. Still, the suppression of the entire order of Observants followed quickly upon their positive refusal to be bound by the articles proposed to them by Lee and Bedyll. "Within a few days," writes the great authority on the history

* Wright, "Supp. of Monast.," pp. 41-44.

of this period, "two carts of friars were seen passing through the city to the Tower."* These were the staunch Franciscans of Observance. By the beginning of August, Chapuys wrote to tell his master that "of the seven† houses of Observants, four have been already emptied of friars because they have refused to swear to the statutes made against the Pope. Those in the other two expect to be expelled."‡ Three weeks later their expectation had been fulfilled, as the Imperial ambassador again wrote "that all the observants of the kingdom have been driven from their monasteries for refusing the oath against the Holy See, and have been distributed in several monasteries, where they were locked up in chains and worse treated than they could be in prison."

About two hundred of the Observant friars were thus cast without trial into prison. The convents from which they were expelled were temporarily occupied by friars of the Augustinian order.§ Fifty of the Observants died from the hardships of their prison life; several, through the influence of Wrio-

* Mr. Gairdner, vii., Preface, xxviii.

† These convents were said to be "houses of the foundation of Henry VII." ("Prevarication of the Church's Liberties," ch. iv., Eyston MS., quoted in Lewis' "Sanders' Schism," p. 111.) Most of them, however, existed as monasteries before, and Henry VII. only made them Observants. See "Dugdale," vi., p. 1504.

‡ Calendar, vii., No. 1057. August 7th.

§ Editor of "Sanders," 1587, probably on Bourchier's authority, who gives the same, "Hist de Mait." FF. Ord. Min., 1583.

thesley, their secret friend and admirer, obtained leave to retire into France and Scotland,* and others possibly passed into Ireland with the permission of Crumwell, who was glad to get rid of them on any terms. To this may refer the note entered in the ministers' "Remembrances":—"Item to remember the friars of Greenwich to have licence to go into Ireland."†

Father Thomas Bourchier adds‡ a few details concerning the horrors of the lot of those thus condemned to prison. One of their number, friar Anthony Brookby, *alias* Broche, a man well skilled in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, was kept closely confined in prison and racked. For twenty-five days at a time, he was not allowed to lie down or to have the small comfort of water to wash himself. He was kept alive by food privately supplied him from outside his prison by some faithful friend, and is supposed to have been strangled with the cord of his religious habit, during the night of July 19th, 1537.§

Another member of the order, father Thomas Cortt, who had preached publicly in London against the king's measures, was thrown into Newgate. After three years he died of the filth and discomforts of his prison on July 27th of the same year in which father Anthony Brookby died. He was

* Lingard, "Hist.," vi., p. 268.

† Calendar, vii., No. 49.

‡ "Historia de Mart. Frat. Ord. Minor de Observantia," 1583.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 15. *Cf.* Dodd, ed. 1737, i., p. 238.

buried privately in St. Sepulchre's church, and a pious woman named Margaret Herbert placed a stone over his grave.* A few days later, August 3rd, 1537, a young religious, Thomas Belchiam, twenty-eight years of age, died of starvation in his prison. Many others perished of want and sickness brought on by the filth and foul air in which they were confined, and by the privations and hardships of prison life. Two-and-thirty of the brethren, chained two-and-two, were sent to various prisons in England and there finished their lives in suffering, but in glorious constancy.† After August, 1537, eight of the number, who still survived, were set free, and left England for Belgium and Scotland.‡

From a letter, written by friar Francis Lybert, one of the Franciscans of Observance to "master James Becky, at the Cross Keys, the next house to St. Magnus Church in going down towards Billingsgate,"

* *Ibid.*, p. 16.

† The following is a contemporary account:—"Ab eadem causa (denial of king's supremacy) Franciscani quorum erat in Anglia ingens numerus, edicto Regis capti uno tempore omnes, et in vincula conjecti ac diu rerum omnium egestate vexati sunt, quorum cum aliquot statim occidisset, reliquis, partim oblivione Regis, partim unius e ministris studio, producta magis vita quam concessa est, nam denique omnes, aut palam supplicio affecti, aut fame necati, aut malo diuturni Carceris confecti periere." B. Mus. Add. MS. 15387. Vatican Transcripts, "A contemporary account of Fisher and More preserved at the Vatican," printed in Pocock's "Records of the Reform.," No. 356.

‡ This inhuman treatment might have seemed improbable did we not know that the Carthusian fathers were treated in the same way shortly after this period.

a glimpse is afforded of one of the friars who had been distributed, as Chapuys wrote, "in monasteries," where they "were locked up in chains and worse treated than they could be in prison." He writes that "I and my fellow, father Abraham, are at the Grey friars at Stamford, enclosed according to the king's command, and treated as prisoners." They wish to have some news about their fathers in London and Greenwich, as they have been told "that they have all sworn and somewhat changed their government, at which," continues the writer, "we marvel. Notwithstanding, if they think that God is pleased with it, their conscience discharged, the world edified, and any profit may come of it, we desire to have a more perfect knowledge, and then we shall do as God shall inspire us, either suffer pain still and be enclosed, or else go at liberty as they do." The friar then asks for some necessary things, such as "penner and inkhorn," to be obtained from "brother Feeld at the London Grey friars," and then concludes with the necessary caution, "read this letter, rend and burn it, for you know what hurt hath chanced by letter writing, though many never intended hurt thereby." *

No account of the suppression of the Observant friars would be complete without the history of their most renowned member, blessed John Forest. It has already been remarked, that there is reason to believe that friar Forest was safely lodged in some

* Calendar, vii., No. 1307. Oct. 27.

sort of prison in the spring of the year 1534. From that date till his martyrdom on May 22nd, 1538, little is heard about him. It can hardly be supposed that Henry and Crumwell would have allowed so powerful and uncompromising an opponent to be at large without placing a watch upon his movements, and at least receiving reports from the spies engaged in such a work. This silence strengthens the authority of father Thomas Bourchier that Forest was in prison during the four years that preceded his martyrdom. He was some sixty-four years of age when he was imprisoned in 1534. Forty-three of these he had spent in religion, and had held the highest offices amongst his brethren. He had been warden of Greenwich and provincial of all the Observant friars in England, as well as the constant friend and confessor of queen Catherine.

Just before friar Forest's martyrdom attempts were apparently made to collect evidence against him. At that time his confinement could not have been very strict, as he was able to hear confessions at the Grey Friars in London. It has been said that Forest used the confessional for the purpose of urging his penitents against the king's supremacy. The following memorandum seems to refer to inquiries as to his teaching on this point:—"Mem.: That about the 23rd day of February, the 29th year of the reign of my most dread sovereign lord king Henry VIII. (1538). . . the lord Mordaunt shewed Sir William Hewyit, priest and servant to the said lord, that he

the said lord was minded to take his departure from London for to be confessed." Upon this communication the chaplain went to the Grey Friars and learnt that friar Forest heard confessions there. "And then," the document goes on, "the said Sir William said my lord my master will be confessed. And then the said porter said again, 'I think if he come about nine o'clock he may speak with him, for he saith Our Lady's mass.'" Then lord Mordaunt went as he had been directed and made his confession, after which he said to friar Forest, "Ask what you like and I will pay you forty pence to buy it with. Whereupon the said friar desired the said lord to cause it to be delivered to the said porter for his coal." This the chaplain and lord Mordaunt, who signs the deposition, declare was all their acquaintance with the friar. "And," the former adds, "as for the bishop of Rome, or any speaking with the said friar Forest of the said bishop of Rome, or in any matter concerning the said bishop or his authority, or any matter touching the king or the bishop of Rome, there never was such matter touched, opened, or mooted by the friar or his said lord or either of them."*

Bishop Latimer, who was apparently a great enemy of friar Forest, and who subsequently preached at his barbarous death, seems to have thought the treatment he received in prison was too gentle. "Forest, as I hear," he writes to Crumwell, "is not

* B. Mus. Cott. MS. Cleop., E. iv., f. 130.

duly accompanied in Newgate for his amendment with the white friars of Doncaster and the monks of the Charterhouse, in a fit chamber more like to indurate than to mollify, whether through the fault of the sheriff or of the gaoler or both, no man could sooner discern than your lordship. Some think he is rather comforted in his way than discouraged; some think he is allowed both to hear mass and also to receive the Sacrament; which, if it be so, it is enough to confirm him in his obstinacy."* It has been said, that "when first arrested he was terrified; he acknowledged his offences, submitted, and was pardoned."† That Mr. Froude has founded this statement on anything but his own imagination does not appear in his pages. Most certainly such weakness is the very reverse of what we should expect from all that reliable history tells us of blessed John Forest. It is certainly undeniable that he absolutely refused to make any abjuration of Papal supremacy when it was demanded of him.‡ Sanders, who at the time was a boy of about thirteen years old at Winchester school, declares that Forest

* Parker Soc., "Latimer's Remains," p. 392.

† Froude, "Hist.," Vol. iii., p. 292.

‡ Stow, "Annales," ed. 1600, p. 569, says Forest "was apprehended for that in secret confession he had declared to many the king's subjects that the king was not supreme head of the church, whereas before he had taken the oath to the same supremacy. Upon this point he was examined and answered that he took his oath with his outward man; but his inward man never consented thereunto."

died "because he denied the ecclesiastical supremacy of the king."*

The depositions against him are clear and decisive of his real sentiments as to the matters at issue between the king and Rome. "He said," they declare, "that blessed man St. Thomas of Canterbury suffered death for the rights of the church, for there was a great man—meaning thereby king Harry the Second—which, because St. Thomas of Canterbury would not grant him such things as he asked, contrary to the liberties of the church, first banished him out of this realm; and at his return he was slain at his own church, for the right of holy church, as many holy fathers have suffered now of late—as that holy father the bishop of Rochester—and he doubteth not but their souls be now in heaven."

"He saith and believeth that he ought to have a double obedience: First to the king's highness, by the law of God; and the second to the bishop of Rome, by his rule and profession."

"He confesseth that he used and practised to induce men in confession to hold and stick to the old fashion of belief that was used in the realm of long time past."†

We seem to see, in the second of these depositions, the foundation upon which so many writers have based their charge of duplicity against blessed John Forest. That no such charge can be main-

* Schism, "Lewis' Trans.," p. 139.

† Record Office MS., quoted by Froude, iii., p. 292.

tained is obvious from the words of the accusation itself. All subsequent authors have derived their facts of the case from the chronicler Hall, who, although a contemporary and writing ten years after the event, cannot be considered as an absolutely trustworthy guide* as against documentary evidence in such a matter. What is certain is, that Forest died for his belief in the necessity of the Papal supremacy and that even in the agony of his fearful death he remained constant and true to his faith.

Like More, Fisher and the rest, who were martyred in defence of the Papal primacy, Forest fell under the law of treason, but for him alone was reserved the additional distinction of suffering for heresy also. Collier says he "was condemned for heresy and high treason, though by what law they could stretch his crime to heresy is hard to discover, for he was tried only for dissuading his penitents in confession from owning the king's supremacy."† It was, however, a very easy matter in those days to bring a man within the reach of the law on any count, and the way that friar Forest was convicted of heresy was after all surprisingly simple. It may be told in

* Brewer, in quoting the speech against Wolsey that Hall puts into the mouth of More, adds the following note:—"Hall, p. 764. It must be stated in More's exculpation that Hall is the only authority for this speech. No trace of this invective against Wolsey is to be found in the short notice of More's speech as preserved in the parliament roll. . or is the meagre description of it there given easily reconciled with Hall's account," &c. (Letters, &c., Vol. iv., Introduction, 539.)

† "Ecc. Hist.," ed. 1714, ii., p. 149.

the words of Mr. Froude.* "In an official paper of about this date," he writes, "I find 'heresy' defined to be 'that which is against scripture.' To say, therefore, that Peter and his successors be heads of the universal church, and stand stubbornly in it, is heresy, because it is against scripture (Ecclesiastes v.), where it is written, '*Insuper universæ terræ rex imperat servienti*'—that is to say, the king commandeth the whole country as his subjects—and, therefore, it followeth that the bishop of Rome, which is in Italy, where the emperor is king, is subject to the emperor, and that the emperor may command him; and if he should be head of the Universal Church, then he should be head over the emperor, and command the emperor, and that is directly against the said text, Ecclesiastes, v. Wherefore to stand in it opiniatively is heresy." In accord with this "monstrous reasoning" it was possible to find friar Forest guilty of being a heretic as well as a traitor, and so adjudge him to the barbarous and painful death usually reserved for such as obstinately had remained wedded to heretical doctrines. The commission which tried the friar was presided over, most probably, by Cranmer. He at least writes to make arrangements with Crumwell for the examination. "The bishop of Worcester" (Hugh Latimer), he says, "and I will be to-morrow with your lordship to know your pleasure concerning friar Forest. For if we should proceed against him according to the order of the law, there must be articles devised

* "Hist.," iii., p. 293.

beforehand which must be ministered unto him; and therefore it will be very well done that one draw them up against our meeting."* The result of the meeting was that Forest was condemned to die by fire in Smithfield on the 22nd May, 1538.

Bishop Latimer was appointed to preach at the execution and he announces his acceptance of the office in a very singular letter. "Sir," he writes to Crumwell. "If it be your pleasure, as it is, that I shall play the fool after my customable manner when Forest shall suffer, I would wish that my stage stood near unto Forest, for I would endeavour myself so to content the people that therewith I might also convert Forest, God so helping, or, rather, altogether working. Wherefore, I would that he shall hear what I shall say—*si forte*—if he would yet with his heart return to his abjuration, I would wish his pardon. Such is my foolishness." †

On the day appointed for the execution preparations were made in Smithfield for it. A pair of new gallows were placed over the faggots for a fire, from which friar Forest could be suspended in a "cradle of chains." The billets of wood were to a large extent composed of the chips of a desecrated image, called Darvel Gadarn, which had been held in high honour by the people of North Wales‡ and

* Cranmer's Works, Vol. i., p. 239.

† R. O. Crum. Cor., Vol. xlix., f. 391.

‡ Ellis Price to Crumwell, B. Mus. Cott. MS., Cleop. E. iv., f. 556. It was held as a tradition, says Hall, that the image should set a *Forest* on fire. Perhaps this suggested the manner of death awarded to Forest.

which had been removed from its ancient shrine shortly before. A note in the handwriting of John Stow, the historian and antiquary, says : "Memorandum that on Wednesday, the 22nd of May, in A°. 1538, friar Forest, of Greenwich, a doctor of divinity, was burnt in Smithfield for certain points he held of the bishop of Rome, and for that he would not stick and preach the New Testament, for he said that he would preach but the pope's traditions and laws and decrees, and in them and for them he died. At whose death was Mr. Richard Gressham, mayor of this city with his sheriffs; also the duke of Norfolk, the duke of Suffolk, the lord Admiral, the lord Privy seal (Crumwell), with divers others. And of the Commons of the city a great number, and the bishop of Worcester did preach before him face to face, the which bishop's name is Latimer."*

We can easily imagine the sermon that fell from the lips of the preacher. "It was of the usual kind," writes Froude, "the passionate language of passionate conviction," as he "confuted the friar's errors and moved him to repentance."† But Latimer's eloquence and vigorous denunciation of the Pope and his followers proved of no avail, for "in the end, when the bishop asked him what state he would die in, the friar with a loud voice answered and said that if an angel should come down from Heaven and

* B. Mus. Harl. MS., 530, f. 120.

† Stow, "Annales," p. 569.

teach him any other doctrine than he had received and believed from his youth he would not now believe him. And that if his body should be cut joint after joint, or member after member burnt, hanged, or what pain soever might be done to his body, he would never turn from his old profession. Moreover, he told the bishop that seven years before he dared not have made such a sermon for his life."*

Delay was useless; no argument was likely to shake the constancy of the friar, and, with Crumwell and the rest looking on, Forest was slung from the gallows with chains "by the middle and armholes, all quick over the flames." † In his mortal agony he clutched at the steps of the ladder to sway himself out of the blaze; and the pitiless chronicler who records the scene could only see in this last weakness an evidence of guilt. "So impatiently," says Hall, "he took his death as never any man that put his trust in God."‡

* Stow, "Annales," p. 569.
† Hall, ed. 1548, f. 233.
‡ Froude, "Hist.," Vol. iii., p. 296.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CARTHUSIANS.

BEFORE the final dispersion of the Franciscan Observants, Crumwell had commenced his conflict with the fathers of the Charterhouse. Unlike the friars, the retiring religious of St. Bruno's order had taken no active part in opposing the union of Henry and Anne Boleyn. Neither had they appeared conspicuously as the champions of queen Catherine; and, although it was known that the "Holy maid of Kent" had visited them at their London house, there was nothing in the evidence collected against her to mark them out as her advisers or abettors. Still, their general influence, at this time very considerable owing to the exceptional sanctity of their lives, was exercised in opposition to the king's revolt from the holy see. Rumour even spoke of the prior of the London Charterhouse, John Houghton, as privately exhorting his penitents to remain firm in refusing to abjure the Papal supremacy.*

In the spring of 1534, Henry was fully com-

* Strype, "Mems.," i., p. 305.

mitted to the breach with Rome. It became then of vital importance to suppress all opposition, more especially when both he and his ministers must have known that it was impossible "to rely on the unbiassed judgment of his subjects to support his peculiar views of lawful and unlawful matrimony."* With this object, much had already been attempted. The execution of Elizabeth Barton and her companions, in the April of this year, was used as the means for extorting the new oath of succession from the people of London. At the same time the troubles of the Carthusian fathers commenced.

The Charterhouse of the "Salutation of the most blessed Mother of God" in London was a model of religious observance. According to Maurice Chauncy, one of the few religious of the convent who purchased their lives by compliance with the king's wishes, all were leading the most holy lives. In the language of his penitence he alone, "the spotted and diseased sheep" of the flock, deserved "to be cast out of the fold," and to lose the crown of martyrdom.† Twenty of the community were not yet thirty-eight years of age, and they vied one with the other in the fervour of their observance. Even the lay brethren were remarkable for their perfect lives, and were true "*conversi*" from the world and its ways. Two of their number, brothers Roger and John, had often been seen by Chauncy

* Gairdner, Calend., vii., Preface, p. 23.

† "Historia aliquot nostri sæculi martyrum," 1583, p. 41.

raised in ecstasy from the ground whilst praying.* For a period in his early life, blessed Thomas More had been attracted by their holiness and had seriously contemplated begging to be received into the ranks of such undoubted servants of God. On the very eve of their difficulties with Henry and Crumwell, their lives were attracting those who hoped to find among them a haven of rest from the gathering storm. The Imperial ambassador, Chapuys, reports to Charles V. in January, 1534 that:—"The vice-chamberlain (Sir John Gage), who is of the council, and one of the wisest and most experienced in war of the whole kingdom, has renounced his office and gone to the Charterhouse, intending with the consent of his wife to become a Carthusian."†

"Maurice Chauncy," writes Mr. Froude, "commences with his own confession. He had fallen when others stood. He was, as he says, an unworthy brother, a Saul among the prophets, a Judas among the apostles, a child of Ephraim turning himself back in the day of battle, for which his cowardice, while his brother monks were saints in heaven, he was doing penance in sorrow, tossing on the waves of the wide world. The early chapters contain a loving, lingering picture of his cloister life, to him the perfection of earthly happiness. It is placed before us in all its superstition, its devotion, and its simplicity, the counterpart, even in minute details, of accounts of cloisters when monasticism was in the young vigour

* *Ibid.*, p. 47. † Calendar, vii., No. 14. Jan. 3, 1534.

of its life, which had been written ten centuries before. St. Bede or St. Cuthbert might have found himself in the house of the London Carthusians, and he would have had few questions to ask, and no duties to learn or to unlearn. The form of the buildings would have seemed more elaborate, the notes of the organ would have added richer solemnity to the services, but the salient features of the scene would have been all familiar. He would have lived in a cell of the same shape, he would have thought the same thoughts, spoken the same words in the same language. The prayers, the daily life, almost the very faces with which he was surrounded would have seemed all unaltered. A thousand years of the world's history had rolled by, and these lonely islands of prayer had remained still anchored in the stream, the strands of the ropes which held them, wearing now to a thread and very near their last parting, but still unbroken. What they had been they were, and if Maurice Chauncy's description had come down to us as the account of the monastery in which Offa of Mercia did penance for his crimes, we could have detected no internal symptoms of a later age."*

A worthy superior presided over this saintly community. Blessed John Houghton had sprung from a good Essex family, and had gone early in life to the University of Cambridge in preparation for the honourable career in the world to which the inten-

* "Hist.," ii., p. 343.

tions of his parents had destined him. Before however his education there was completed, he conceived the idea of entering the Church. His father showed himself altogether adverse to such a vocation and hence he left his home until his ordination, finding a refuge with a friendly parish priest. For four years he remained one of the secular clergy and at the end of that time, feeling himself called to something higher, he entered the Carthusian order. He was quickly promoted to offices of trust in the community and held the posts of sacrist and procurator before his appointment to the dignity of the priorship.* He had served God for twenty years in religion before the troublous times of Henry's reign came to disturb the peace of his cloistered life and to win for him the crown of martyrdom.

Maurice Chauncy draws a perfect picture of him as prior. In person "he was short, with a graceful figure and dignified appearance; his actions modest, his voice gentle, chaste in body, in heart humble, he was admired and sought after by all, and by his community was most beloved and esteemed. One and all revered him, and none were ever known to speak a word against him."† He had, indeed, no taste or desire for dignities or position, and although he maintained the necessary rights of the office in which providence had placed him, he showed himself at all times an indulgent "brother to each individual religious" of his community. He governed

* "Historia," *ut sup.*, p. 24. † *Ibid.*, p. 40.

rather by example than precept, and his subjects were influenced as much by the fervour of his pre-eminent sanctity as by the burning exhortations he addressed to them in their chapter. He rarely offered Mass, but that he was wrapt in ecstasy and poured forth floods of tears at the recollection of Christ's loving kindness and compassion. His zeal for the service of God was especially manifested in the care and regulation of the divine office, and once at least each month, in his exhortation to the religious, he would cast himself upon his knees before them and with tears bewail his shortcomings, and ask pardon of his brethren.* So great, too, was his spirit of recollection that, as William Exmew, the father vicar of the convent and his confessor, had been heard to declare, in spite of the many and great cares of his office, his thoughts were never permitted to wander off to them in the hours of prayer.†

Chauncy speaks of portents and wonders which in 1533 were thought to warn the community of impending danger. Without doubt, notwithstanding the seclusion of their lives, rumours of the gathering storm which was to involve them in temporal ruin must have reached them in their cells. The thorny questions which surrounded the great matter of Henry's divorce must have been suggested to their minds, and were doubtless thought over and prayed over in their solitude. The royal agents would thus have found the simple monks not un-

* *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31. † *Ibid.*, p. 40.

prepared to meet their demands for complete surrender of conscience by the resolute refusal, which has made their names respected even by those who cannot appreciate their motives.

Early in April the convent was visited by Lee and Bedyll, under a commission from the king, to obtain the signatures of the religious to the oath of succession. The royal agents first saw the prior, but could make nothing of him. To all their arguments he replied, that "it pertained not to his vocation and calling nor to that of his subjects to meddle in or discuss the king's business, neither could they or ought they to do so, and that it did not concern him whom the king wished to divorce or marry, so long as he was not asked for any opinion."* The visitors were not satisfied with this reply and insisted on meeting the brethren in chapter. To this demand the prior was forced to agree, but the situation only obliged him to speak more plainly in the presence of his brethren. For his part, he said "he could not understand how it was possible that a marriage ratified by the Church and so long unquestioned should now be undone," and to this view the whole community adhered.

Such plain speaking on the part of John Houghton was sufficient for the commissioners. His committal to the Tower, together with the procurator of the convent, Humphrey Middlemore, quickly followed. They

* Chauncy. "Commentariolus de vitæ ratione et martyrio Cartusianorum," ed. Gandavi, 1608, p. 46.

remained there a month, suffering, as the historian of these troubles relates, from the dirt and pestilential atmosphere of the dungeon in which they were confined, as well as from absolute want of food. A letter relating to the imprisonment of another priest in the same place about this time, throws some light upon the rigours of an imprisonment. Mr. Legge, the chaplain of the confessor to Sion convent, had been sent to the Tower by order of Crumwell, and by his direction also, his friends were informed in order that they might look to his necessities. The unfortunate priest had only a little over three shillings, and Crumwell told the writer to say "if he lacks money he will have neither meat, drink, nor bread." There would have been "no bed but the boards" for him, had not the wife of his gaoler brought him a mattrass and clothes* to lie upon.

Stokesley, the bishop of London and Lee, archbishop of York, visited Houghton and Middlemore in the Tower. They persuaded them that the question of the succession was not a cause in which to sacrifice their lives for conscience sake. After a month's space, therefore, the prior and his companion promised to comply with the king's desires and returned home to their brethren. Meeting his subjects in the chapter house, Houghton informed them of his submission, but added that he was convinced this yielding would not avail to save them for long from the destruction he foresaw. "Our hour, dear brethren," he con-

* Calendar, vii., No. 756.

tinued, "is not yet come. In the same night in which we were set free I had a dream that I should not escape thus. Within a year I shall be brought again to that place, and then I shall finish my course."* Influenced by this prediction the monks at first resolved not to abide by the prior's promised submission, but again to refuse compliance with the royal demands. For a time they were resolute. When, however, the commissioners returned, in company with the lord mayor and his officers and threatened them with immediate imprisonment, they yielded, taking the oath under the condition "so far as it was lawful." The swearing occupied two days. On the first occasion, May 29th, 1534, the commissioners were Lee and Bedyll and fourteen subscribed, amongst whom were Houghton and Middlemore; and on the second day, June 6th, the remainder of the community conformed, in the presence of Lee and another visitor, Thomas Kytson.†

"We all swore as we were required," writes Chauncy, "making one condition, that we submitted only so far as it was lawful for us so to do. Thus, like Jonah, we were delivered from the belly of this monster, this *immanis ceta*, and began again to rejoice, like him, under the shadow of the gourd of our home. But it is better to trust in the Lord than in princes, in whom is no salvation. God had prepared a worm that smote our gourd and made it perish."‡

* Chauncy in Froude's "Hist.," ii., 347.

† Calendar, vii., No. 728. Rymer, xiv., 491.

‡ Chauncy. Froude, ii., p. 347.

From the hour of their compliance the community found little peace. Even among the brethren of the Charterhouse there were to be found those who were restless under the restraints of monastic discipline. These religious saw in the difficulties which beset their house a possible means of escape from the bonds which kept them to the cloister. Thus one of their number writes to implore Crumwell's aid. He claims to have been the friend of the king and to have given Bedyll important information about his brethren in the chapter house "on Friday after Corpus Christi." For this the prior, he says, "keeps him like an infidel out of sight and speech of all friends." At the end of the letter its purport appears. He hints that he wishes to be released from his life in the monastery, like another monk "Dan John Norton," who three years before had been shut up in his cell, but who was now "a canon in the west country."*

About the real spirit of the community as a body, during the months that passed before the martyrdom of the prior and his companions, there can be no doubt. Archdeacon Bedyll at the end of August, 1534, wrote to Crumwell about them and the religious of Sion. "I am right sorry to see the foolishness and obstinacy of diverse religious men so addicted to the bishop of Rome and his usurped power, that they contemn all counsel and likewise jeopardy their bodies and souls and the suppression of their houses

* Calendar, vii., No. 1046.

as careless men and willing to die. If it were not for the opinion which men had, and some yet have, in their apparent holiness, which is and was, for the most part covert hypocrisy, it made no great matter what became of them so that their souls were saved. And as for my part, I would that all such obstinate persons of them, who be willing to die for the advancement of the bishop of Rome's authority, were dead indeed by God's hand; that no man should run wrongfully into obloquy for their just punishment. For the avoiding whereof, and for the charity that I owe to their bodies and souls, I have taken some pains to reduce them from their errors, and will take more if I be commanded, specially to the intent that my sovereign lord, the king's grace, should not be troubled or disquieted with their extreme madness and folly. I mean this not only by divers of the Charterhouses and chiefly at London, but also by others, as by divers of the friars at Sion who are minded to offer themselves in sacrifice to the great idol of Rome; and in their so minding they be cursed of God, as all others be, who put their trust and confidence in any man concerning eternal life. And in case they had no such confidence in the bishop of Rome, they would never be so ready to lose their temporal life for him and for his sake. . . ." Then after writing much about Sion monastery, Bedyll concludes by confessing that he has "laboured so much already in vain to bring them (the Carthusian monks) from their

inveterate error to the very duty of a faithful subject to his natural prince."*

The efforts made to bring the Charterhouse monks into compliance with the royal will were continued throughout the year. The prior of the Brigittines of Sion, who was sometimes known under the title of "father confessor," was apparently looked upon by Crumwell as zealous in Henry's service. To him, therefore, by direction of the minister, several of the Carthusian religious were sent for advice. Two of these, both priests and professed monks, named William Broke and Bartholomew Burgoyn, surrendered their consciences after a long argument with the prior at Sion. Writing to him later they speak of the "great pains" he has taken to win over two other religious of their convent, and express their hopes that he will succeed in inducing them to trust their souls to his guidance.† Maurice Chauncy probably owes the loss of his martyr's crown, which he so much bewails, to the perverting influence of this Brigittine friar. In company with another religious of the Charterhouse, John Foxe, he was sent to Sion at the end of August, 1534. The letter which they took with them begged the prior to argue with them, and "show charity to them as you have done to others." They are scrupulous, the writer says, "about the bishop of Rome," but are not "obstinate," and each of them has a "book of authorities" which must be answered.‡

* State Papers, i., 423. † Calendar, vii., No. 1093. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 1150.

By the beginning of 1535 any doubts which might be entertained as to the full intentions of Henry were at an end. On January 15th the new title of "Supreme Head" was incorporated in the king's style by decree of council. The rupture with Rome and the causes which led to it were deeply distasteful to the nation at large. "On no other subject," writes Mr. Gairdner, "during the whole reign have we such overt and repeated expressions of dissatisfaction with the king and his proceedings."* Many of the influential persons of the realm were anxiously looking for some external intervention to stop the course upon which Henry had embarked. Chapuys asserts, that lord Darcy's physician had assured him "that the whole realm was so indignant at the oppressions and enormities now practised, that if the emperor would make the smallest effort the king would be ruined."† The act of supremacy had, indeed, added greatly to the royal power, as well as to the kingly style, and there was no pretence that it was framed with any scrupulous concern for civil liberty. With an authority "to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend heresies, errors, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be," to the same extent as his compliant judges might hold lawful to any spiritual authority, what might not an unscrupulous king like Henry attempt when urged on by such a minister as

* *Ibid.*, viii., Preface on Nos. 589, 736-8, &c.

† *Ibid.*, No. 1.

Crumwell! No wonder the people of England looked forward with dread to the possible development of a power which had added the spiritual to the temporal authority. No wonder if they distrusted a monarch who, according to the quaint but significant expression of "an old writer," was constituted "a king with a pope in his belly."*

To the fathers of the Charterhouse the act of supremacy meant destruction. By the end of 1534 it would have been abundantly clear to Crumwell, that whatever the few weaker spirits among the community, who had been seduced by promise or specious argument, might do, the Carthusians as a body would resist even to death any further demand of Henry for rejection of papal authority. Their doom was known to be certain, when it became publicly understood that those suspected of half-heartedness in the king's cause, or of lukewarmness and secret hostility to the matter of Henry's divorce, might be submitted to questioning on this new kingly prerogative of spiritual supremacy. The prior, no longer doubting that the end of their suspense was at hand, told his subjects to prepare for the worst.

"When we were all in great consternation," writes Maurice Chauncy, "he said to us:—'Very sorry am I, and my heart is heavy, especially for you, my younger friends, of whom I see so many round me. Here you are living in your innocence. The yoke will not be laid upon your necks, nor the rod of

* Amos, "Statutes of Hen. VIII.," p. 283.

persecution. But if you are taken hence, and mingle among the Gentiles, you may learn the works of them, and, having begun in the spirit, you may be consumed in the flesh. And there may be others amongst us whose hearts are still infirm. If these mix again with the world, I fear how it may be with them; and what shall I say, and what shall I do, if I cannot save those whom God has trusted to my charge.'

"Then all who were present," says Chauncy, "burst into tears, and cried with one voice, 'Let us die together in our integrity, and heaven and earth shall witness for us how unjustly we are cut off.'

"The prior answered sadly — 'Would, indeed, that it might be so; that so dying we might live, as living we die. But they will not do to us so great a kindness, nor to themselves so great an injury. Many of you are of noble blood; and what I think they will do is this: Me and the elder brethren they will kill; and they will dismiss you that are young into a world which is not for you. If, therefore, it depend on me alone—if my oath will suffice for the house—I will throw myself for your sakes on the mercy of God. I will make myself anathema; and to preserve you from these dangers I will consent to the king's will. If, however, they have determined otherwise—if they choose to have the consent of us all—the will of God be done. If one death will not avail, we will all die.'

"So then, bidding us prepare for the worst, that

the Lord when He knocked might find us ready, he desired us to choose each our confessor, and to confess our sins one to another, giving us power to grant each other absolution.

"The day after he preached a sermon in the chapel on 59th Psalm—'O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast destroyed us,' concluding with the words, 'It is better that we should suffer here a short penance for our faults than be reserved for the eternal pains of hell hereafter;' and, so ending, he turned to us and bade us all do as we saw him do. Then, rising from his place, he went direct to the eldest of the brethren, who was sitting nearest to himself, and, kneeling before him, begged his forgiveness for any offence which in heart, word, or deed he might have committed against him. Thence he proceeded to the next, and said the same; and so to the next, through us all, we following him and saying as he did, each from each imploring pardon."*

"Thus," writes Froude, "with unobtrusive nobleness did these poor men prepare themselves for their end; not less beautiful in their resolution, not less deserving the everlasting remembrance of mankind than those three hundred who, in the summer morning, sat combing their golden hair in the passes of Thermopylæ. We will not regret their cause; there is no cause for which any man can more nobly suffer than to witness that it is better for him to die than to speak words which he does not mean. Nor, in

* Chauncy, in Froude, ii., Chapt. 9.

this their hour of trial, were they left without higher comfort." *

"The third day after," the story goes on, "was the Mass of the Holy Ghost, and God made known His presence among us. For when the Host was lifted up, there came, as it were, a whisper of air, which breathed upon our faces as we knelt. Some perceived it with the bodily senses; all felt it as it thrilled into their hearts. And then followed a sweet, soft sound of music, at which our venerable father was so moved, God being thus abundantly manifested among us, that he sank down in tears, and for a long time could not continue the service—we all remaining stupified, hearing the melody, and feeling the marvellous effects of it upon our spirits, but knowing neither whence it came nor whither it went. Only our hearts rejoiced as we perceived that God was with us indeed."†

At this time Robert Laurence, the prior of the Charterhouse of Beauvale, in Nottinghamshire and Augustine Webster, prior of Axholme in Lincolnshire, came to visit and consult with their brethren of the London house. The first of these had been a member of this monastery. Five years before, he had been called to succeed John Houghton in the priorship of Beauvale, when the latter was summoned to take that of London. The second, Augustine

* "Hist.," ii., p. 350.

† Chauncy, *ut sup.* The translation given throughout is that of Mr. Froude in his History, Vol. ii., Cap. 9.

Webster had gone to Axholme from Shene Charterhouse in Surrey. The three priors, after consultation, determined to anticipate the coming of the king's commissioners. By a personal interview with Cromwell himself, they hoped to obtain some mitigation of the expected royal demands. Perhaps, in accordance with Houghton's determination, they desired to offer themselves in behalf of their brethren. Cromwell, on learning the purpose of their visit, refused to listen to them and sent them forthwith from his house to the Tower as rebels and would-be traitors.* A week later, on April 20th, 1535, the minister held an examination of Webster and Laurence at his house in the "Rolls." There were present a number of the council as witnesses. The notary, John Ap-Rice, records, that when asked whether they would take the oath of supremacy and reject the authority of any other but the king, over the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, they both stoutly refused.†

In prison the three fathers had been joined by Father Richard Reynolds, a Brigittine monk of Sion, who had been committed to ward for the same cause. The depositions record the opinions of each of the accused in much the same language. Houghton's view about the supremacy was clear and decided. Laurence and Webster both declared, that they could "not take our sovereign lord to be supreme head of the Church, but him that is by God

* Chauncy, "Commentariolus," &c., p. 76.

† Calendar, viii., No. 565 (1).

the head of the Church, that is the bishop of Rome, as Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine teach." Richard Reynolds declared, that though "he would spend his blood for the king, still that the pope is head of the Church, that hath been these three hundred years, and not the king." And he also said "that he doth, as a thousand thousand that are dead" had done before in this matter.* As nothing was likely to change the constancy of these fathers, a special commission was appointed to try them for treason under the act of succession. On April 24th the grand jury panel was returned, and the trial appointed for Wednesday, the 28th of the same month. Two days before, they underwent an examination in the Tower by Crumwell and a committee of the privy council. Their refusal to accept the oath of supremacy on this occasion formed the substance of the charge against them. Before the jury, on the 28th, they were indicted, in common with father Reynolds, on the charge that they "did, on 26 April, 27 Henry VIII., at the Tower of London, in the county of Middlesex, openly declare and say, 'the king, our sovereign lord, is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England.'" They all four pleaded not guilty to the novel charge of verbal treason. The verdict of the jury was deferred till the following day.†

"The jury," as an old account of the trial says, "could not agree to condemn these four

* *Ibid.*, No. 566, also No. 565 (2).

† Deputy Keeper, Rept. iii., App. ii., 238.

religious persons, because their consciences proved them they did not it maliciously. The judges hereupon resolved them, that whosoever denied the supremacy denied it maliciously, and the expressing of the word maliciously in the act was a void limit and restraint of the construction of the words and intention of the offence. The jury, for all this, could not agree to condemn them, whereupon Crumwell, in a rage, went unto the jury and threatened them if they condemned them not. And so being overcome by his threats they found them guilty, and had great thanks, but they were afterwards ashamed to show their faces, and some of them took great (harm) for it."*

The verdict of "guilty" was followed by a sentence of death on all the four, to be carried out according to the form usual in cases of high treason. They were then conducted back to the Tower to prepare for their end. Meanwhile, when Houghton lay in prison, Crumwell's agents were busy amongst his community endeavouring to win them over to compliance with the king's orders. One of these commissioners, John Whalley, who appears to have been specially appointed to guard the Charterhouse at this time, writes to Crumwell his views as to the methods

* B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152, f. 308. A similar account is given by Chauncy. See also "Strype Mems.," i., 305. Mr. Froude (ii., 357 note), says that it is impossible Crumwell could have threatened the jury, because the verdict was given the same day as the petty jury were empanelled. The jury were returned on the 28th, whilst their verdict was given the following day. It does not seem clear whether the pleadings and verdict were on the same day.

most likely to succeed. "It is of no use," he says, "for one Mr. Rastall to come there. He pleads, indeed, that you (Crumwell) wished him daily to resort hither," but the monks "laugh and jest at all things he speaketh. No question of it," he continues, "they be exceedingly superstitious, ceremonious, and pharisaical, and wonderfully addict to their old *mumpsimus*; nevertheless, better and more charitable it were to convert them, than to put them to the extremity of the law. I perceive right well by many of them, but not all, that they care not to be put from their religion, but they fear that in case they should now swerve and go from their religion, and hereafter the Pope and his adherents should prevail, that then they should be grievously punished (yea, unto death) for breaking of the oath that they have made to the Pope, and no doubt of it they have and use very sore punishments (as it is informed me). Wherefore, as beforesaid, I would (saving your mastership's better advice) that some honest, learned (and men assured to the king's highness and you) were sent hither. And thus I would have them occupied for a season. And shortly after, I would have the vicar of Croydon, Dr. Buckmaster, Symonds and such other of the popish sort, in open audience (and not to be suffered to speak with any of them alone) not only to preach against their superstitions and pharisaical ceremonies, yea, but also the pope's usurped power. And after all this, to cause the bishops of York, Winchester, Durham,

Lincoln, Bath and London, yea and divers other bishops that be near hand, in like manner to preach, for they have great consideration and trust in them, insomuch that some of them heretofore have said to me that these foresaid bishops and divers others will not say nor yet think but for fear, that the king's grace should (or in any wise may) be supreme head of the Church of England." If all this does not suffice to change them, then the writer would advise, that they be called before the nobility and others and sentenced as they deserve.*

The three Carthusian priors, Houghton, Webster and Lawrence, together with the Brigittine, father Reynolds and his neighbour, John Hale, vicar of Isleworth were executed at Tyburn on May 4th. The details of the execution were of a nature more horrible than usual, even in the terrible and barbarous punishment of death for treason. The fact that the religious were drawn to the place of execution in their habits made a great impression upon the people, and the whole was no doubt arranged in order to afford a terrible example to religious and ecclesiastics of Henry's power. To each, as he mounted the scaffold, a pardon was offered if he would obey the king and parliament. Each in turn rejected the offer of life at the price of a guilty conscience.

"It is altogether a new thing," writes Chapuys to the emperor the following day (May 5th), "that the dukes of Richmond and Norfolk, the earl of Wilt-

* Calendar, viii., No. 600.

shire, his son, and other lords and courtiers were present at the said execution, quite near the sufferers. People say that the king himself would have liked to see the butchery, which is very probable, seeing that nearly all the court, even those of the privy chamber, were there—his principal chamberlain, Norres, bringing with him 40 horses; and it is thought that he (the king) was of the number of five who came thither accoutred and mounted like borderers, who were armed secretly, with vizors before their faces, of which that of the duke of Norfolk's brother got detached, which has caused a great stir, together with the fact that while the five thus habited were speaking all those of the court dislodged."*

Houghton was the first to die. As he mounted beneath the gibbet, in compliance with the usual custom, he spoke briefly to the people. "I call Almighty God to witness," he said, "and all good people, and I beseech you all here present to bear witness for me in the day of judgment, that being here to die, I declare that it is from no obstinate rebellious spirit that I do not obey the king, but because I fear to offend the majesty of God. Our holy mother the Church has decreed otherwise than the king and the parliament have decreed, and therefore, rather than disobey the Church I am ready to

* *Ibid.*, No. 666. On 23rd May Chapuys wrote to Granvelle to say:—"The king was not present at the execution of the Carthusians. He (the king) was very angry with Norfolk and Wiltshire for not answering one of them (Prior Houghton) when he preached a remarkably fine sermon." Spanish St. Papers, v., 166.

suffer. Pray for me and have mercy on my brethren, of whom I have been the unworthy prior." Then, kneeling down, he recited a few verses of the 31st Psalm and calmly resigned himself to the hands of the executioner. The rope used was stout and heavy, in order that the martyrs might not be strangled before the rest of the barbarous butchery could be performed. It is almost impossible to credit the frenzy of diabolical cruelty which is said to have been perpetrated on this occasion in the presence of the court and, as the people believed, of the king himself. Whilst still living they were ripped up in each other's presence, their bodies dishonoured, their limbs torn off, and their hearts 'cut out and rubbed into their mouths and faces.' "*

"The faces of these men," writes Mr. Froude, "did not grow pale; their voices did not shake; they declared themselves liege subjects of the king, and obedient children of the Church; 'giving God thanks that they were held worthy to suffer for the truth.' All died without a murmur. The stern work was ended with quartering the bodies; and the arm of Houghton was hung up as a bloody sign over the archway of the Charterhouse to awe the remaining brothers into submission."†

In this there was found more difficulty than had been anticipated. Two days after the execution, the faithful Bedyll wrote to Crumwell about three of the

* *Ibid.*, No. 726, Bishop of Faenza to M. Ambrogio.

† "History," ii., p. 359.

fathers, of whom he could make nothing. On the very day of the martyrdom of their prior he had apparently gone to the Charterhouse, "and," he says, "had with me divers books and annotations both of mine own and others against the primacy of the bishop of Rome and also of St. Peter, declaring evidently the equality of the apostles by the law of God. And after long communication of more than an hour and a half with the vicar and procurator of the house, I left those books and annotations with them, that they should see the Holy Scriptures and doctors thereupon concerning the said matters, and thereupon conform themselves accordingly. And yesterday they sent me the said books and annotations again home to my house by a servant of theirs without any word or writing. Wherefore, I sent to the procurator to come and speak with me, seeing I kept my bed by reason of sickness and could not come to him; and at his coming I demanded of him whether he and the vicar and other of the seniors had seen or heard the said annotations, or perused the titles of the books making most for the said matters. And he answered that the vicar and he and Newdigate had spent the time upon them till nine or ten of the clock at night, and that they saw nothing in them whereby they were moved to alter their opinion. I then declared to him the danger of his opinion, which was like to be the destruction of them and their house for ever; and as far as I could perceive by my communication with the vicar and procurator on Tuesday,

and with the procurator yesterday, they be obstinately determined to suffer all extremities rather than to alter their opinion, regarding no more the death of their father in word or countenance than (if) he were living and conversing among them. I also demanded of the procurator whether the rest of his brethren were of like opinion, and he answered he was not sure, but he thought they were all of one mind."* In three weeks the fathers here complained of, Humphrey Middlemore, William Exmew and Sebastian Newdigate were lodged in prison. On June 8th, 1535, the bishop of Faenza writes "that the Carthusians, whom the king himself tried to persuade to recognize him as the head of the Church, are in prison with chains round their necks, and will certainly be put to death, but perhaps not so publicly for fear of the displeasure of the people, which was shown at the death of the others." † And Chapuys shortly before mentions that there were "three more Carthusians" in prison, whilst the rest were strictly guarded in their convents by the king's servants, "in whose custody are all the goods of the monasteries of the order." "It is thought," he adds, "that the king will suppress them, as they are rich, and there is no hope of making the religious change their opinion." ‡

The fact of their being chained in prison cannot

* Wright, "Suppress. of Monast.," Camd. Soc., p. 40.

† Calendar, Vol. viii., No. 846.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 751.

now be questioned. A memorandum in the writing of John Stow, the historian, leaves no doubt as to the cruelty practised upon these religious whilst in the Tower and Newgate. "Three of them (the Carthusian fathers), that is to say, Humphrey (Middlemore), William (Exmew), and Sebastian (Newdigate), first stood in prison upright, chained from the neck to the arms, and their legs fettered with locks and chains, by the space of thirteen days."* Two years later a similar cruelty was practised upon a number of their brethren, and under this prolonged punishment many died.

At the trial of these three fathers of the Charterhouse, before the same special commission of *Oyer and Terminer* appointed to try bishop Fisher, they were charged with the same offence as that for which their prior had already suffered death. It was declared that on May 25, at Stepney, each of them did say in conversation together, "I cannot nor will consent to be obedient to the king's highness as a true, lawful and obedient subject to take and repute him to be supreme head in earth of the Church of England under Christ."† They pleaded "not guilty," but were condemned on June 11, and executed at Tyburn on the 19th of the same month.

* *Ibid.*, No. 895. Sanders gives the same account of the inhuman treatment of these three fathers. "They had been," he writes, "for fourteen days before they were put to death, forced to stand upright without the possibility of stirring for any purpose whatever, held fast by iron collars on their necks, arms and thighs."—"Lewis' Trans.," p. 119.

† Dep. Keeper Rept., iii., App., ii., 239.

For two years no more of the Carthusians were put in prison. They were left, in the hope that arguments and restrictions as to liberty and diet would break the spirit of constancy which they displayed. Archdeacon Bedyll is alternately hopeful and desponding. Six weeks after the execution of Middlemore and his two companions he tells Crumwell that he has now some "better hope of the obstinates of the Charterhouse, who, lacking wit and reason, hitherto have been more like madmen than other." He adds a hint about a liberal grant of money, which he will "cause to be conveyed according to his master's pleasure."

The community were kept with the greatest strictness. A body of laymen were appointed as the governors of their house, which to all intents was thus turned into a prison. From the letters of Jasper Fyllol, one of these gaolers, to Crumwell we are afforded one or two glimpses of the state of subjection under which the monks lived during this period. They were kept apparently without sufficient and necessary clothing, for, at the approach of winter in 1535, Fyllol complains that "two or three cwt. of wax" had been taken out of the store-house. This, he thinks, the religious are hoping to sell in order to purchase warm garments.*

Another of the gaolers had written in the spring to say he would take care no one should be admitted

* Calendar, ix., No. 284.

without Crumwell's "token." He concludes his report by saying that he forwards his master some apples from the community store-house, adding "if they like you, they shall be kept for you as long as they last, and provide for the convent almonds and figs accordingly."*

In another letter Fyllol speaks of the difficulty he finds in supplying the house according to the needs of the religious, and the charity they urged him to keep for "strangers in the buttery and at the buttery door." He informs Crumwell also, that "in the beginning of August last past my lord of Canterbury sent for two monks here, Rochester and Rawlins," but had sent Rochester back again, while the latter had now become a secular priest "and eaten flesh."† Chauncy speaks of Rawlins, as always tepid in life, having no taste for the divine office and as one who had long dreamt of casting off the yoke of the religious life, so that Cranmer would have found little difficulty in persuading him to take the final step. In fact, Nicholas Rawlins had himself written to Crumwell to declare his willingness to accept the king as supreme head, "and not act like the prior and other fathers of our house." He further added: "I hope the supreme head will dispense me from religion. I was professed half a year and three weeks before my year of probation, and moreover I was sick in that half year nine weeks," and have not been well since. "I do

* *Ibid.*, viii., No. 601. † Wright, p. 67.

insure you," he concludes, "the religion is so hard, what with fasting and with the great watch, that there is not six whole monks within this cloister but that they have one infirmity or other, which will be their death sooner than God would that it should be."*

Meantime a new prior had been placed over the convent in the room of the martyred Houghton. His name was William Trafford, and he had been a monk of Beauvale. In the beginning of the troubles he had been bold enough in his declarations of constancy and had even been placed under the custody of the sheriff. This was some months before, when Sir John Markham had gone with others to the monastery of Beauvale to "take the value." Sir John, as he tells Crumwell in a letter, had called the "proctor and others of the convent" before him, as the prior was at the time safely lodged in the Tower waiting for his trial. "In a friendly conversation (he had) showed them that the king was of *right* spiritual head." Upon this the procurator, William Trafford, said, "I believe firmly that the pope of Rome is supreme head of the Church Catholic." When the commissioners asked whether he would abide by his words, he replied, "*usque ad mortem.*" Moreover, he wrote his words down and Sir John Markham carried the paper away and placed the monk in safe custody.† What happened to change

* R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xxxv., No. 9.

† Calendar, viii., No. 560.

the heart of this religious does not appear, but the fact of his appointment and that Bedyll praises him would be sufficient to prove the surrender of his conscience to the king, to whom he subsequently resigned his monastery. The religious never knew him as a father and adviser. Of the period of his administration Chauncy says:—"Being deprived of a prior exterior to ourselves, every man's conscience was his prior."

On October 2nd, 1535, Jasper Fyllol wrote to Crumwell a paper of suggestions for the better government of the house. He considered that the number of cloister monks "should be reduced by those who will not acknowledge the king." They should also be made to abandon their solitary life and "sit daily in their 'fraytour' four of them to a mess of meat." This would be a saving, as what served only twelve could be thus made to do for twenty. He then goes on to say, that he has "found in the prior's and proctor's cells three or four foreign printed books," and thinks there must be many more, as "they have great pleasure in reading such, and little or none in the New Testament or other books." He continues:—"Mr. Bedyll and Dr. Crome exhorted Rochester and Fox for more than an hour, but prevailed not. William Marshall lately gave twenty-four English books, called the 'defence of peace,' to be distributed among the monks, of whom many took them saying they would read them if the president licensed them." But "the third day they sent them back,

saying that the president had so commanded. Dom John Rochester took one and kept it four or five days, and then burnt it, which is good matter to lay to them at the time when your pleasure shall be to visit them."*

Crumwell's pleasure was to let them remain some months more enduring a life, which must have been hardly bearable. He hoped, no doubt, that sooner or later they would be broken by the hardships and resign themselves to the king's good pleasure. "But," says Mr. Froude, "the spirit of the old martyrs was in these friars." They came out of the struggle for the most part victorious. Henry and his minister were compelled to proceed to extremities. For some time, however, before their final release from persecution by a death more merciful than Crumwell's treatment, they had been placed under the care of additional gaolers, and the instructions given to these officers reveal the spirit which dictated them. "First," the document runs, "that there be five or six governors of temporal men, learned, wise, and trusty; whereof three or four of them shall be continually there together every meal and lodge there every night."

"Item: that the said governors shall call all the monks before them, and all the other servants and officers of the house; and to show them that the king's grace hath pardoned them of all heresies and treasons by any of them committed before that day,

* *Ibid.*, ix., No. 523.

giving them warning that if they eftsoon offend, to die without mercy: and that there be a pardon purchased for them all under the king's great seal."

"Item: that the same governors take the keys from the proctors and other officers; and to govern the house, and receive all rents, and make all payments, and to be countable to the king's grace thereof."

"Item: that the said governors call all the monks to them severally, one after another, at dinner times; and to examine them of all their opinions, and to exhort them to the truth. Showing them, that if any of them will, he shall have a dispensation to leave the order and to live otherwise; and to have a convenient stipend for a year or two, till he have provided himself of a living; so that he conform himself to the king's laws. And to endeavour himself to learn and to preach the word, which every priest is bound to do. And yet by their religion, as it is said, they have professed falsely the contrary, that none of them shall ever preach the word of God."

"Item: to put all the monks to the cloister for a season, and that no man speak to them but by the licence of one of the said governors."

"Item: to take from them all manner of books, wherein any errors be contained, and to let them all have the Old Testament and the New Testament."

"Item: to cause them to show all their ceremonies, and to teach them and to exhort them to leave and forsake all such ceremonies that be naught."

"Item: if they find any of them so obstinate, that in no wise will be reformed, then to commit him to prison, till the council may take some other direction for them. And they that will be reformed, to sever them from the company of the obstinates, and to be gently handled, and to cause them to utter the secrets and mischiefs used among them."

"Item: there should be three or four times every week during this visitation, a sermon made by some discreet, well learned man, and all the monks, officers, and servants, to be caused to be present; none exception, save only sickness; and the said preachers to have their chambers there, and meat and drink, that they might quietly study therefore during that time."

"Item: the lay brethren be more obstinate, and more forward, and more unreasonable than the monks. Therefore, they should be likewise examined, and the obstinates punished or expulsed, and others kept for a season, for knowledge of divers points of them to be had."*

During this period of probation for the martyr's crown, Chauncy relates that every pressure that could be imagined was brought to bear upon them in the hopes their resolution might be shaken. Privy councillors would come and harangue them in their chapterhouse on their blindness and perversity. Sometimes these visits would be extended so long that they were prevented chaunting their vespers or

* Strype, "Eccl. Mem.," i., p. 307. Ed. 1822.

their matins. One Sunday four of them, who were thought to be the most obstinate, and the leaders of the rest, were taken by force to St. Paul's to listen to a sermon against the pope. Indeed, had Hilsey (the unworthy successor of the martyred Fisher in the see of Rochester) obtained his desires, all the religious of the Charterhouse would have been marshalled at the cross weekly to listen to the sermons. *

At length, on May 4th, 1536, the anniversary of Houghton's death, four, who had been regarded as the leaders in the opposition to the king's designs, were sent to the North of England and placed in houses, the temper of which was known to be true to Henry. Of the rest, eight were transferred to the Brigittine convent of Sion to which a new prior of zealous loyalty had been appointed, upon whose efforts to shake their constancy Crumwell counted. A year passed by before it was deemed prudent to again demand the oath. Hardship, argument and pressure of every kind kept up for two years had sifted the chaff from the grain. The trial prepared the strong for victory and left the weak at last in the power of an enemy who had pursued them so relentlessly. On May 18th, 1537, the royal commissioners attended in the chapterhouse and received the required oath from the prior and twenty of the brethren. Ten still resolutely refused and William Say, the public notary, having summoned them, testified to their continued obstinacy.†

* Calendar, ix., No. 989.

† Rymer, xiv., p. 588.

Their fate was quickly decided. On the 29th of May, eleven days after their refusal, they were removed to Newgate. Their number consisted of three priests, D. Richard Bere, D. Thomas Johnson, and D. John Green, one deacon, John Davy, and six lay brothers, William Greenwood, Thomas Scryven, Robert Salt, Walter Peerson, Thomas Reding and William Horne. Their treatment in prison was similar to that of the three fathers of their house two years previously. A pious lady named Clement, afterwards mother Margaret Clement, has left it on record that she bribed the gaolers to allow her to visit these heroic monks in their prison. Disguised as a milk-maid she went to them and "fed them, putting meat in their mouths, they being tied and not able to stir nor help themselves." She was thus for some days able to preserve their lives, and perform other christian acts of charity for them. After this time the king, finding they were not yet starved to death, commanded a stricter watch to be kept over them. Even then, she managed to gain access to the roof of their cell, "and uncovering the ceiling or tiles over their heads, by a string let them down meat in a basket, approaching the same as well as she could unto their mouths as they did stand chained against the posts."*

After they had been in prison only sixteen days Bedyl wrote to his master concerning them: "My

* Fr. Morris' "Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers," 1st series, pp. 27-28.

very good lord, after my most hearty commendations, it shall please your lordship to understand that the monks of the Charterhouse here at London, which were committed to Newgate for their traitorous behaviour long time continued against the king's grace, be almost dispatched by the hand of God, as it may appear to you by this bill enclosed, whereof, considering their behaviour and the whole matter, I am not sorry, but would that all such as love not the king's highness and his worldly honour were in like case. My lord (as ye may), I desire you, in the way of charity and none otherwise, to be good lord to the prior of the said Charterhouse, who is as honest a man as ever was in that habit (or else I am much deceived), and is one who never offended the king's grace by disobedience to his laws, but hath laboured very sore continually for the reformation of his brethren. And now, at last, at my exhortation and instigation, constantly moved, and finally persuaded his brethren to surrender their house, lands, and goods into the king's hands, and to trust to his mercy and grace. I beseech you, my lord, that the said prior may be so treated, by your help, that he be not sorry and repent that he hath feared and followed your sore words and my gentle exhortation made unto him to surrender his said house, and think that he might have kept the same, if your lordship and I had not led him to the said surrender."*

* Wright, p. 162; From London, 14 June, 1537.

The list of Carthusians, which archdeacon Bedyll says he forwards to Crumwell, is not printed by Wright, although it is in the same collection in the British Museum from which he published the letter itself. It is of great interest as showing that five of the ten had already died from their prison hardships. It runs thus :—

1537. June 14.

There are departed,

Brother William Greenwood.
Dan. John Davy.
Brother Robert Salt.
Brother Walter Peerson.
Dan. Thomas Green.

There are even at the point of death,

Brother Thomas Scryven.
Brother Thomas Reding.

There are sick,

Dan. Thomas Johnson.
Brother William Horne.

One is healed,

Dan. (Richard) Bird (Bere).*

In a very short time the list of the "departed" included all but one. "Furthermore, the other nine," writes the historian Stow, "died in prison with stink and miserably smothered."† The one, who survived the horrors of that Newgate dungeon

* B. Mus. Cott. MS., Cleop., E. iv., f. 256 b.
† B. Mus. Harl. MS., 530, f. 54.

with its slow tortures of starvation and suffocation, was not the monk reported by Bedyll as "healed," but Brother William Horne. He lingered in prison till 1540, when on Wednesday, August 4th, he was hung at Tyburn.

Of the four monks, who had been sent to the north of England in 1536, after all the efforts of Crumwell and his agents had failed to shake their constancy, two received the martyr's palm. They had been placed in the Charterhouse at Hull and complaints having reached Crumwell that they showed no inclination to conform, in 1537 power was granted to the royal officers of the district to enforce the decrees of parliament. The two fathers were consequently seized and brought to York, where they were condemned to death by the Duke of Norfolk. The sentence was carried out in the same city, and their bodies left to hang in chains. "Item. Two of these eighteen," writes Stow, "did remain hanging, the which were John Rochester and James Walwercke."*

When archdeacon Bedyll wrote his letter on June 14th, 1537, the monastery of the London Charterhouse had ceased to exist. By means of the threats, or, as he calls them, the "sore" words of Crumwell and his own persuasions and promises, the remnant of the community had been induced to surrender their house and property to the king. This was done on June 10, and according to the terms, doubtless,

* Stow, *ut sup.*

dictated by Crumwell's agent. "Forasmuch," the document runs, "as the most and greater part of us and other not a few of our convent both living and dead, have grievously offended the most illustrious royal majesty of England, and have so provoked the indignation of his majesty against us and our priory that for our deserts, by the laws of England, not only could the moveable and immoveable good, the rights, and possessions of our priory be confiscated, but also the bodies of those who are living might justly and lawfully be adjudged to a most severe death; considering that it is more prudent and better for us spontaneously and freely to give over all that is ours to the hands and will of the royal clemency than to experience the severity of the laws against us and ours, and that the most just anger of his majesty against us and the rigour of the laws may be more mild and tolerable, we give grant and deliver to our illustrious prince and lord Henry VIII." * all our property and wealth.

For this compliance, with what was thus represented to them as the king's desires, the religious were rewarded, but hardly as liberally as Bedyll appears to have led them to suppose. A paper among the Augmentation office records, headed "Monks to have pensions," and signed *T. Crumwell*, shows that £20 a year was promised to Trafford, and to fourteen of

* Morris, "Troubles," 1st series, p. 24, from the Latin in Bearcroft's "History of Sutton." Lond., 1737, p. 255. The original is in Rot. Claus. 29 H. VIII., pars. 1. 16.

his religious £5 each. The last name on the list is that of Maurice Chauncy, to whom we are indebted for so much of our knowledge about the troubles of the Carthusian fathers at this period and who so narrowly missed the crown of martyrdom gained by his braver brethren.*

Of the forty-eight members living in the monastery in 1535, thirty were choir monks and the rest lay brethren. Twenty signed away their monastery in 1537, but continued to remain there till November the 15th, 1539, when twelve choir religious, six lay brethren and three inmates of the cloister were forcibly expelled. In December of the same year pensions were granted by letters patent to seventeen of these religious,† according to the rate promised by Crumwell, and two years subsequently a similar grant was enrolled for the eighteenth.‡ It is exceeding doubtful whether even these small pensions were long paid. In 1542 the names of only three are entered in the Augmentation office books as having received the promised pension, and in the first year of Philip and Mary only one continued to draw his £5. On June 12th, 1542, the king granted the use

* R. O. Augmentation Office, Miscell. Books, No. 245, f. 83.

† *Ibid.*, No. 233, f. 64, *et seq.* The names were: William Trafford, prior, £20; Edward Skerne, vicar, £5; Thos. Barmingham, John Enys, Richard Tragose, Thos. Baker, Ed. Digby, John Bardeyn, John Fox, William Broke, Barthol. Burgon, John Bulleyn, Oliver Batemanson, John Nicholson, Maurice Chauncy, William Wayte.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 235, f. 76. Thomas Salter, Ap. 1541.

of the buildings of the old Charterhouse to John Bridges and Thomas Hall as a place to keep the royal tents and engines of war. Chauncy records with horror the scenes which desecrated the sacred buildings, as sacrilegious men tossed their dice upon the very altar of the church. In 1544 the site and buildings were bestowed upon the earl of Northumberland.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISITATION OF MONASTERIES IN 1535-6.

On the 22nd of June, 1535, the feast of England's promartyr, St. Alban, the saintly and venerable bishop Fisher died for his faith. Four days before, the Carthusian fathers had preceded him to their common reward. A fortnight later, on Tuesday the octave day of St. Peter, and (as he himself remarked) the eve of the translation of St. Thomas of Canterbury, the learned Sir Thomas More laid down his life for the same cause. Thus by the close of the first week in July the axe at Tower Hill and the gallows at Tyburn had rid Henry VIII. of the foremost opponents of his concubinage with Anne Boleyn, and of his assumed ecclesiastical supremacy. There was, however, hardly any period of his reign when the king and his counsellors were more harassed than during the latter half of this year. The foreign relations of the country were becoming strained. The people at home were restless and disheartened. The longest memory could not recall a summer more unfavourable to agriculture. The corn harvest was well nigh a complete failure, the yield being scarcely

Sir Thomas More, after Holbein.

more than the third part of an average crop.* It had rained, so said the people, ever since the execution of the Carthusians,† and they looked upon this as a mark of divine anger at the misdeeds of Henry.‡

So pitiable was the state of the country that the farmers of royal lands were quite unable to pay their rents, and Thomas Crumwell was unwilling to exasperate the people by levying the taxes, which had been granted by the authority of Parliament. Sickness was everywhere prevalent, and for this cause parliament, convened for November, was prorogued till the following February. Meanwhile the royal purse was empty and the salaries of the officials remained unpaid,§ while the household of the unfortunate queen Catherine was left entirely without resources. John Gostwyk, Crumwell's secretary, wrote from London "though much in fear of the plague,"‖ making earnest and constant demands for money. On Thursday, 2nd September, for instance, he says that "Sir E. Bedingfeld has been again about money for the princess dowager's house. He wants to buy ling and cod and other necessaries at Sturbridge fair. I have employed almost all the money I have." Again, on the 27th, he writes: "Sir E. Bedingfeld came for some

* Bib. Nat. MSS. Dupuy, Vol. 547. Quoted by P. Friedmann, "Anne Boleyn," Vol. ii., p. 120.

† *Ibid.*, June 18, 1535.

‡ Calendar, ix., No. 594.

§ Friedmann, *ut sup.*

‖ Calendar, ix., No. 2.

money, as he is clean without, and the debts of the house amount to 1,000 marks; £200 is due to a London fishmonger, and £180 to a grocer, who are calling every day upon me for the same."*

The case of the court was thus almost desperate when the king repaired to Winchester to spend the autumn. Whilst there, he made a first essay in replenishing his empty coffers from ecclesiastical treasuries. At the end of September Chapuys wrote to the emperor that, "the king having arrived in Winchester, where he is at present, caused an inventory to be made of the treasures of the church, from which he took certain fine rich unicorn's horns (licornes) and a large silver cross adorned with jewels."† These modest beginnings were, however, coloured by some show at least of restitution, for the king bestowed upon the community certain mills, which he took from the bishop for the purpose.

The execution of bishop Fisher removed one obstacle in the path of spoliation on which Henry had now entered. The bishop had steadily set his face against any proposal of this kind. A valuable contemporary life of the venerable martyr, which has somehow generally escaped notice,‡ says that "whilst he (Fisher) was alive he maintained the privileges of the monasteries." The sub-contemporary life of Dr. Richard Hall, which is preserved in substance

* *Ibid.*, No. 451. † *Ibid.*, No. 434.

‡ B. Mus. Arundel MS., 152, fol. 159.

in that printed by Thomas Bailey in 1655, relates that it was proposed to grant the king all monasteries under the value of £200 a year, because he had been put to great charges in the matter of the divorce. The bishop "could never be brought to that, but openly resisted it with all the force he could, and on a time said among them: My lords, pray you take good heed what you do in hasty granting to the king's demands in this great matter. It is here required that we should grant him the small abbeys for ease of his charges. Whereunto if we condescend it is like the great will be demanded ere it be long after. . For the time all was averted, and no more said as long as this good father lived, but shortly after his death the matter was revived, and granted according to the king's good will and pleasure."*

In determining to strike a blow at the monastic bodies Crumwell had a double object—to overthrow the papal system in its strongholds,† and to finger some of the riches with which the piety of ten centuries had endowed them. By the middle of the year 1534 commissioners were busily journeying through England to tender the oath of supremacy to the religious. As no special form had been prescribed by parliament, Crumwell took advantage of

* Fol. 396. See also "Cobbett's Parl. Hist.," Vol. i., p. 502.

† Lord Herbert, "Hen. VIII.," p. 395, says:—"They (the monasteries) were looked upon as a body of reserve for the pope, and always ready to appear in his quarrels."

the omission. He made his agents tender to the monks a much more stringent and explicit renunciation of the papal supremacy and jurisdiction than that rejected by More and Fisher, and already subscribed to by many of the secular clergy. The commissioners appear to have met with only partial success. The intolerable nature of the oath demanded seems to suggest that the intention of its framer was to drive the religious to refuse, and thus to create a pretext for falling upon and destroying their houses.* If the new system of religion was to prevail, it was impossible to allow large bodies of men and women to remain opposed at heart, if not openly, to the policy of Henry's undisguised defiance of papal authority. The royal supremacy was the touchstone of loyalty and religion in the minds of king and minister. A "strong coercion" had already done much to beat down opposition and remorseless executions had made further individual resistance, to the despotic will of

* Canon Dixon, "Hist. of Church of England," Vol. i., p. 213, says that "the oath was taken in almost every chapter house where it was tendered." This is generally stated as a fact, but as far as is known there is no proof of it. The list of "acknowledgments of royal supremacy," printed in the 7th report of the Deputy keeper, App. II., contains all the known documents as to the religious bodies. They number only 105, a very small fraction of the whole. Of these Mr. F. Devon, the assistant keeper of public records, in making the list remarks:—"I believe it contains all the original acknowledgments of supremacy deposited in the branch public record office at the chapter house. The signatures are in my opinion not all *autographs*, but *frequently* in the same handwriting, and my impression is that the writer of the deed *often* added many of the names."

the king and machiavellian policy of Thomas Crumwell all but impossible. Union, moreover, might be expected to give strength and tenacity of purpose to the monks and friars. Their direct dependence, besides, on the Holy See caused them to be regarded in a special way as the "spies of the pope."* The popular veneration in which they were held† must in these circumstances have made them particularly obnoxious and, as far as Crumwell and his policy was concerned, dangerous. It was the opinion of more than one foreigner in England at the time that any movement of the emperor or pope against Henry would have made the nation rise against their rulers.‡ John Ap Rice and Thomas Legh, afterwards two of the royal visitors of the monasteries, who had been throughout England on the king's business, and so had means of forming a judgment, declared that even the bishops "would refer their jurisdiction to someone else than the king *if they dared.*"§ Hence the immediate necessity of subduing the monastic bodies, which Crumwell regarded as so many strongholds of papal power scattered throughout the country. "As many of the great men of the state and Church thought," writes von Ranke, "so thought also the pious

* Rec. Off. Crum. Cor., Vol. xv., No. 7.

† See Harpsfield, "Treatise on the Divorce," Camd. Societ. Ed., p. 296-301. The records of the Pilgrimage of Grace afford ample evidence of this popular esteem.

‡ Calendar, Vol. ix., Nos. 435, &c.

§ *Ibid.*, No. 424.

members of the monasteries and cloistered convents. They opposed the supremacy not, as they said, from inclination to disobedience, but because Holy Mother Church ordered otherwise than king and parliament ordained. The apology merely served to condemn them. In the rules they followed, in the orders to which they belonged, the intercommunion of Latin christianity had its most living expression, but it was exactly this that the king and parliament wished to sever. Wolsey had, as we know, and with the help of Crumwell, taken in hand to suppress many of them, but in the new order of things there was absolutely no place for the monastic system. It was necessarily sacrificed to the unity of the country, and at the same time to the greed of great men."*

This "greed of great men," and in the first place of the king and Crumwell, was the second motive which prompted the suppression of the religious houses. It is difficult for us to estimate at its true value the prize which Henry hoped to obtain in the estates of the religious bodies. Nearly all the wealth of the country at this time consisted of real property; the amount of personal property being comparatively insignificant. Of the whole area of England, the part owned by the monasteries was very large, although their wealth has been greatly exaggerated.† Still, the prize was more than regal,

* "Hist. of England," Vol. i., p. 158 (ed. 1875).

† The revenue of the king at this time has been estimated at about £140,000 a year. Hume calculates the whole rental of the

and by this time not only had Henry's appetite been sharpened by his appropriation as supreme ecclesiastical authority of first fruits and other Church revenues, but the man who had been bold enough to oppose his schemes had already paid the penalty in his execution. But even now the breach with Rome was by no means regarded as definitive. There was still some slight hope that peace might be made. Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, told Crumwell that, at all events the statutes already passed, "by which the king received inestimable profit from churchmen* might be confirmed to some extent." The suggestion, however, was calculated to arouse Crumwell's fears for himself, as it opened up a possibility of the ruin of Anne Boleyn and her party, which would involve his own fall. To get rid of the religious houses would make it almost impossible to turn back along the path that had been entered on. It would, moreover, strike at the very heart of the pope's power in England and most effectually dash the hopes entertained of its renewal. As early as May, 1535, Chapuys wrote to Charles V.: "The people are being constantly pillaged and eaten up.

nation at £3,000,000, of which from £140,000 to £170,000 belonged to the religious bodies (*Cf.* Lingard, Note E., Vol. vi.). Besides this, Henry obtained vast sums of money from the Church plate and jewels of the monasteries, so that taking all into account, and putting the value of the money then at twelve times the present value, the property confiscated must have been worth some £50,000,000 of our money (*Cf.* Blunt, "Reformation," p. 371).

* The act of parliament giving to the king "first fruits" and "tenths."

It is thought the king will suppress them (the Carthusians) as they are rich, and there is no hope of making them change their opinions."*

Two years before, a parliament had transferred the right of visitation from the pope to the king.† Henry was empowered to issue commissions for visiting "monasteries, priories, houses and places religious exempt." In the methods of visitation Crumwell, as commissioner for Wolsey, had been well instructed. He had gone round the country for that purpose and gained himself a reputation "for accessibility to bribes and presents in the disposal of monastic leases."‡ Lord Herbert states that the scheme for the dissolution of monasteries was discussed at a meeting of the council where it met with considerable opposition. From this disapproval of the measure the king saw it would be necessary to carry out his designs by degrees.§

The royal commissioners first visited the Charterhouse monks and the Observants of Richmond and Greenwich. Shortly after they got to work, they found their paths crossed by the bishops. The king's

* Calendar, ix., Vol. viii., p. 280.

† 20th clause of an act, 1533, "Concerning Peter's pence and dispensations."

‡ Brewer's "Hen. VIII.," Vol. ii., p. 268.

§ "Life of Hen. VIII.," p. 424. As the council books of this period are not forthcoming it is impossible to verify this statement. It is, however, very probable. We may note here the extraordinary gaps which exist in the journal books of the houses of lords and commons as well as in the council books at the most critical period of this reign.

letter of September 18th to Cranmer suspended all episcopal authority during the progress of the commission. The bishops did not relish this interference, and it was not till a fortnight later (October 2) that the archbishop of Canterbury issued the king's inhibition to his suffragans.* Almost at the same time, two of the commissioners, Legh and Ap Rice, "supposing the bishops would be in hand with you again touching the inhibitions,"† furnished Crumwell with their reasons for thus getting the bishops suspended from using their jurisdiction.

At this time the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were looked upon almost in the light of monastic houses. Early in September Dr. Layton is found at Oxford and Dr. Legh, a fitting coadjutor, similarly engaged at the sister university. Legh had written on Sept. 3rd to Crumwell urging the visitation of these colleges, but telling him "well to consider whom he sent to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where all would either be found virtue and goodness, or else the fountain of all vice and mischief."‡ Layton's account of Oxford and his doings there gives an insight into the rough-and-ready work performed during that visit.

"We have set Duns in Bocardo,"§ he writes,

* Calendar, ix., No. 517.

† *Ibid.*, No. 424.

‡ Wright, "Suppression of Monast.," Camd. Soc., p. 61.

§ "Bocardo" was the old North gate of Oxford. It was used as a prison and hence the name became a general term for such. Latimer so uses it in one of his sermons. *Cf.* "Notes and Queries," 2nd series, viii., 1 Oct., 1859.

"and have utterly banished him Oxford for ever, with all his blind glosses. (He) is now made a common servant to every man, fast nailed up upon posts at all common houses of easement: id quod oculis meis vidi; and the second time we came to New College, after we had declared your injunctions, we found all the great quadrant court full of the leaves of Duns, the wind blowing them into every corner. And there we found one Mr. Greenfield, a gentleman of Buckinghamshire, gathering up part of the said books' leaves (as he said) therewith to make him sewels or blansheres to keep the deer within the wood, thereby to have the better cry with his hounds."§ Besides thus abolishing the study of scholastic philosophy, as typified by the works of Duns Scotus, the study of canon law was prohibited and further and more stringent rules were imposed on the monastic students.

The commissioners, the chief of whom, with Legh and Layton, were Ap Rice, Dr. London and Bedyll, entered on their task armed with the most complete authority. They really, however, continued to be in the most servile dependence on the chief inquisitor, Crumwell. "Having experience not long ago in myself," as Ap Rice puts it in a letter to his master, "how grievous, yea and deadly, it is for any man to have the displeasure of such a man as you are. . I would not wish my most enemy so great a displeasure."‖

* *Ibid.*, p. 71. † Calendar, ix., No. 630.

Layton also, in an abject letter to Crumwell begged that he might be sent to visit the north part of England. He promised that no one else, "of what degree soever he be, shall do the kyng's highness so good service in this matter for those parts, doing all things so diligently for *your purpose* and discharge. Our desire is, therefore," he said, "now to declare unto you our true hearts and faithful minds, our fast and unfeigned service that we bear towards you and owe unto you, as ye have of right bound us."* It was not till later in the year, however, that Layton had his wish granted. Meantime he and the others were busy enough. They were furnished with a set of eighty-six articles of inquiry † and with twenty-five injunctions, to which they had power to add much at their discretion. The articles of inquiry were searching, the injunctions minute and exacting. Framed in the spirit of three centuries earlier, unworkable in practice and enforced by such agents, it is easy to understand, even were there no written evidence of the fact, that they were galling and unbearable to the helpless inmates of the monasteries. We may give a passing notice to one or two of these regulations, as they show the spirit which actuated those who framed them. All religious under twenty-four years of age, or who had been professed under

* Wright, p. 156. The editor puts this letter in 1537, but both internal evidence and the date "Friday, June 4th," show that it was written at this period.

† Printed together with the injunctions in Wilkins' "Concilia," iii., 786.

twenty, were to be dismissed from the religious life. Those who were left became practically prisoners in their monasteries. No one was allowed to leave the precincts (which even in the larger monasteries were very confined as to limit) or to visit there. In many instances porters, who were in reality gaolers, were appointed to see that this impossible regulation was kept. What was simply destructive of all discipline and order in the monasteries was an injunction that every religious, who wished to complain of anything done by his superior or any of his brethren, was to have a right at any time to appeal to Crumwell. To facilitate this the superior was ordered to find any subject the money and means for prosecuting such an appeal in person, if he so desired.

Injunctions such as these could only have been intended to invite disobedience and thus to give the king numberless opportunities of interference with the internal economy of the monasteries. His object, apparently, was to harass the monks into giving up a bootless struggle and into abandoning their houses. The visitor Ap Rice, not so deeply in Crumwell's counsels as some of his colleagues, wrote that his companion Legh was pushing matters too fast. He remarked that it was impossible for the religious to be kept as prisoners, and that even the Carthusians had found it absolutely necessary to allow their priors to go abroad on business of their monastery.* Legh, however, discloses the truth as to the

* Calendar, ix., No. 139.

secret policy pursued by Crumwell. In a letter from the abbey of Denny a month or so later he writes:—"By this ye may see that they shall not need to be put forth, but that they will make instance themselves, so that their doing shall be imputed to themselves and to no other." To this letter Ap Rice adds a postscript, showing that he too now understood the object of the royal injunctions. "Although I reckon it well done that all were out," he says, "yet I think it were best that at their own instant suit they might be dismissed to avoid calumniation and envy. And so *compelling them to observe these injunctions ye shall have them all to do shortly.* And the people shall know it the better that it cometh upon their suit, if they be not discharged straight while we be here, for then the people would say that we went for nothing else, even though the truth were contrary."*

Mere petty vexations, however, were not the chief means for carrying out the great work of destruction. Layton, Crumwell's right-hand man in this matter, saw in the supremacy question a screw to torture consciences. By inducing a cowardice resulting from actions against conscience, he prepared his victims for the final surrender of their personal rights. "I should advise you," he says, in a letter containing his first suggestion as to the visitation of the province of York, "to set forth the king's authority as supreme head by all possible means. There can be

* *Ibid.*, No. 708.

no better way to beat the king's authority into the heads of the rude people of the north than to show them that the king intends reformation and correction of religious. They are more superstitious than virtuous, long accustomed to frantic fantasies and ceremonies, which they regard more than either God or their prince.

"The Book of Articles is clear written, in the custody of Bartlett your clerk, and a commission is ready for the same. You will never know," he adds significantly, "what I can do till you try me."*

No sooner were the commissioners at their work than difficulties rose up amongst them. The letters in which they refer their quarrels to Crumwell are instructive, in regard as well to the character, as to the methods, of these chosen instruments of reform. Legh complains to Crumwell of Layton, and he in his turn is complained of by his companion Ap Rice. Layton is inclined to be too easy in keeping the unfortunate religious strict prisoners. "He has left it more at the discretion of the head," writes Legh; "I have not, in order that they might the more know the king's supreme ecclesiastical power."† Moreover, he has not always dismissed those under twenty-four years of age. In reply, Layton writes:—"And as touching the injunctions which your mastership do take to be very slender, it may please you to understand that they be not given for injunctions, but only for summary monitions and rules

* *Ibid.*, viii., p. 375. † *Ibid.*, ix., No. 621.

to be observed until the injunctions shall hereafter come to every place under the king's seal . . And by your better advice I think it in no wise expedient to give injunctions forthwith but *viva voce,* or else by some note in writing, somewhat to do for a rule and order until the injunctions shall come. Over this, when your mastership writeth that the king's grace's pleasure is that the injunctions should be absolute, it shall be. I dare say well," adds the wily agent, "that when ye have known my conceit in the rules and injunctions, and what I have there done in every condition, the king shall have no less expectation of your affairs than his grace had heretofore. Praying God that rather I may be buried quick than to be the occasion why the king's highness should diminish any part of the 'affiance,' confidence, or the expectation of your assured and proved mind towards his grace."* This would seem to mean that Layton had schemes of his own for harrying the religious, which he did not think fit to communicate, by letter at least, even to Crumwell. The nature of his "conceit" may be gathered sufficiently from his later letters.

John Ap Rice was not better pleased with his companion, Dr. Legh, than the latter had been with Layton. He writes to Crumwell:—"I see you are not pleased because I have not told you of Dr. Legh's demeanour. I often thought I ought to have revealed certain abuses and excesses, but first, I saw

* R. O. Crum. Cor., Vol. xx., No. 17.

how little the complaint of others, like the abbot of Bruton,* where he used himself, methought, very insolently, did succeed. And thinking that his demeanour at Bradstock, Stanley and Edington, where he made no less ruffling with the heads than he did at Bruton, should of all likelihood come likewise to your knowledge, and saw nothing said unto him therefore: and also supposing that you, considering how he was one of them that depraved me heretofore with your mastership, for no just cause, but for displeasure which he have towards me for certain causes which I will declare unto you more at leisure . . I called some of my servants at London to come with me and see all his proceedings, gestures, and manner of going thence at Westminster and St. Paul's. I did not want to go with him lest he, with his bold excuse, wherein he is, I advise you, ever ready, would have overcome me, being but of small audacity, especially in accusations. . I am not eloquent in accusations as some men be.

"First, in his going he is too insolent and 'pom-

* This abbot had been visited by Layton about the middle of August, who complained that there "and Glastonbury . . the brethren be so straight kept that they cannot offend" (Wright, p. 59), when on the 23rd of the same month Legh arrived, and claimed the power to visit again. No wonder "the abbot, little regarding the authority committed to him, with sharp and quick answers," said: if he "would visit them anew it should be the very undoing of all abbots and monasteries, and otherwise showed himself very haughty and obstinate" (Calendar, ix., No. 159). What Legh said and how he treated the abbot may be gathered from Ap. Rice's letter.

patique,' which, because he went so in London in the face of all the world, I thought you would have known. . Then he handleth the fathers where he cometh very roughly, and many times for small causes, as the abbots of Bruton and Stanley and the master of Edington for not meeting of him at the door, when they had no warning of his coming. Also, I require more modesty and affability, which would purchase him more reverence than his own setting forth and 'satrapike' countenance.

"The man is young and of intolerable elation of mind. As concerning his taking, I think it excessive in many things. First, for the election of the prior of Coventry he took £15;* for the election lately at Bevall, the Charterhouse, £20, besides his costs, £6, and his reward unknown to me. . And surely he asketh no less for every election than £20 as of duty, which in my opinion is too much, and above any duty that was ever taken heretofore.

"Also in his visitations he refuseth many times his reward, though it be competent, for that they offer him so little and maketh them to send after him such rewards as may please him, for surely religious men were never afraid so much of Dr. Allen as they be of him, he useth such rough fashion with them."

After saying that Legh always went about attended

* This would be equal to some £180 of our money. Other sums mentioned in the letter are: "Vale Royal £15, and costs £6; Tarrent £20, and costs £4."

by twelve men in livery besides his brother, Ap Rice adds a word about himself, which shows us that he had evidently been complained of. "And as for mine own dealing and behaviour I trust ye shall have no wise cause of complaint against me; one thing humbly desiring your mastership that ye give no light credence till the matter be proved and my defence. As to the defence in the other matter I was so abashed that I had not those things in my remembrance that was for a defence."*

The following day Ap Rice seems to have become alarmed at the possible consequences of his confidences to Crumwell, and wrote again—"I have certified to you certain things touching Mr. Doctor Legh. Although they be all true, I in haste did not make use of moderation. First, having experience in myself not long ago how grievous, yea and deadly, it is for any man to have the displeasure of such a man as you are, specially having your favour before and having only of you, and what desperation or other inconvenience may ensue thereupon to the same, so that I would not wish my most enemy so great a displeasure; and also considering for your part how ye cannot suddenly and violently use any extremity towards the said Mr. Doctor, but ye shall thereby give occasion to some to reckon that ye were so quick in chosing such a one to that room as ye would so soon after disallow and reprove. Also it would be thought by some

* Calendar, ix., No. 622.

other that all his doings and proceedings in such places as he was at were reproved by you, and he for the same so handled. . . . It would be well, first, gently to admonish him to amendment, and not utterly discourage him and strike him under foot. . "

He concludes in words, the significance of which it is impossible to mistake. " And forasmuch as the said Mr. Doctor is *of such acquaintance and familiarity with many rufflers and serving men,* if he knew this matter to have proceeded of me, though it be but at your commandment, *I having commonly no great assistance with me when I go abroad, might take perchance irrecoverable harm of him or his ere I were aware.* Please keep secret what I have said."* Personal violence and even murder was, in the opinion of his colleague, the treatment Legh would mete out to one of the king's agents. How can it be expected that the scurrilous tongue, " eloquent in accusations," should spare and slay not the reputations of the monks and nuns whose destruction was his special errand. " Quia exacuit ut gladium linguam suam, intendit rem amaram ut sagittet in occulto immaculatum."

These extracts give some idea of the instruments by which Crumwell hoped to effect the ruin of the monasteries. To those, who have studied the history of these times, it is a matter of no surprise to find that these men were allowed free and unrestrained license in dealing with their unfortunate

* *Ibid.*, No. 630.

victims. Legh was written to, apparently, as to his harshness, and his reply is instructive, and no doubt was conclusive from Crumwell's point of view. "Where I have in all places that I have been at, according to mine instructions and to the king's grace's pleasure and yours, restrained as well the heads and masters of the same places as the brethren from going forth of the precints of the said places, which I assure you grieveth the said heads not a little, as ye shall perceive by the instant suites that they shall make to the king's grace and to you."*

He had acknowledged in a letter previously quoted that the injunctions in this matter were impossible to keep, but would teach the monks the power of the king. The permissions for mitigation, for which there will be "instant suites," may, he hints, be a source of profit also for Crumwell himself.† The latter no doubt considered this point, and left the victims under the torture. The result is, that in his correspondence at this period are numberless applications for relief from the unwarrantable imprisonment, to which the religious had been consigned. We can imagine the satisfaction with which Crumwell penned a note in his "remembrances," possibly on the information contained in Legh's letter, "of the visitations and how much it grieveth the heads to be kept within their monasteries."‡ Chapuys understood the whole movement, and wrote in September:

* Wright, p. 56. † Calendar, Vol. ix., Preface xx.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 498.

—"Crumwell goes round about visiting the abbeys, making inventories of their goods and revenues, instructing them fully in the tenets of this new sect, turning out of the abbeys monks and nuns who made their profession before they were twenty-five, and leaving the rest free to go out or remain. It is true they are not expressly told to go out, but it is clearly given them to understand that they had better do it, for they are going to make a reformation of them so severe and strange that in the end they will go, which is the object the king is aiming at, in order to have better occasion to seize the property without causing the people to murmur."* This is strangely like the reason assigned by Legh himself for making the injunctions impossible to keep.†

Over the sad lot of the poor nuns left to the tender mercies of such ruffians, history has, perhaps wisely, drawn a veil. Here and there we may, however, still catch a glimpse of the dreadful reality. Dr. Ortiz, writing to the empress what is reported in Rome as to the visitation of English monasteries, which in common with so many he attributes to the influence of Anne Boleyn who hated the religious as most opposed to her union with Henry, says:—"In England Anne removed from some monasteries the most able persons and left the infirm with so little to maintain themselves that they are constrained to relinquish the state of religion. They took out of

* *Ibid.*, ix., No. 434. † See letter previously quoted.

the monastery all the nuns of less than twenty-five years of age, and one of the commissioners who went for this purpose spoke immodestly to the nuns, who rebuked him, saying that their apostolic privileges were being violated. The commissary replied that he held more power from the king than there was in the whole apostolic see, and referring the nuns complaint to master Crumwell, who is the secretary of the king, by whom comes the ordering of all these evils, told her this was only the beginning of the end."* Sanders, almost a contemporary, states that "Lee (Legh) indeed, in order to discharge correctly the duties laid upon him, tempted the religious to sin, and he was more ready to inquire into and speak about uncleanness of living than anything else." †

"The papists," writes the historian Fuller, "do heavily complain (how justly God alone knoweth) that a third sort of agents were employed to practice on the chastity of the nuns, so to surprise them into wantonness. Some young gallants were on design sent to some convents, with fair faces, flattering tongues, store of gold and good clothes, youth, wit, wantonness and what else might work on the weaker sex."‡ He then goes on to relate a story which bears out what he has said of two young men who went to a convent near Cambridge, and who gave out that they were able to seduce the nuns at their will,

* Calendar, ix., No. 873.

† "Anglican Schism," Lewis trans., p. 129.

‡ "Church Hist.," ii., p. 216 (ed. 1837).

although the very contrary was the case. One of these confessed the same to Sir William Stanley, who told it to a noble catholic who was alive when Fuller wrote. Of this story a modern protestant authority writes :—" The story has too much *vraisemblance* to be set aside . . and in addition to this, the tone of Layton's letters to Crumwell are of such a kind as to make one fear that some nuns were indeed thus wickedly seduced, and others not less wickedly accused falsely. Those, however, who duly appreciate the character of their countrywomen will believe that among these evil-intreated 'innocents' there were not a few who passed through the scorching fire of temptation scatheless under the protection of their heavenly bridegroom, for the English daughters of the nineteenth century whom we see around us are sisters to the English nuns of the sixteenth, of whom we know only by vague tradition."*

No words of description can give so lively a picture of the abject poverty, to which many of the religious houses were reduced under the constant exactions of the king and Crumwell during the past years, as the letters of Layton himself. These will also serve to show the rapidity with which the commissioners got over their work. They will likewise help us to appreciate, at their true worth, charges made in a reckless and wholesale manner and with-

* " The Reformation of Church of England," Rev. J. H. Blunt. 6th ed., 1885. Vol. i., p. 316.

out the possibility of even a shadow of investigation.

The following is a letter regarding Layton's Sussex visitation in October, 1535:—"On Friday at night I came into Sussex to an abbey called Durford. It might better be called Dirtyford; the poorest abbey that I have seen, as this bearer, the abbot thereof can tell: far in debt and great decay. This young man for his time hath done right well, whom I have licensed to repair unto you and to declare unto you his mind, concerning license and liberty of himself and other his brethren.

"An abbey or a priory of minors and a priory of canons nigh together lay towards Chichester, and because of their poverty not able to lodge us, we were compelled to ride out of our way to an abbey of Cistercians called Waverly, there to lodge on Saturday at night. . These two poor priories we will dispatch on Monday by the way, and so on Monday at night we shall be at Chichester cathedral church."*

Apparently the doctor did not enjoy his stay at Waverly abbey, as the following tells us. It also shows how, through the tyranny of the crown in forcing lay servants upon the abbeys, the monks were by this time powerless in their own homes.

"I have licensed this bringer, the abbot of Waverly, to repair unto you for liberty to survey his husbandry, whereupon consisteth the wealth of his monastery. The man is honest, but none of the children of Solo-

* Calendar, ix., No. 444.

mon. Every monk within his house is his fellow, and every servant his master. Mr. Treasurer and other more gentleman hath put servants unto him, whom the poor man dare neither command nor displease. Yesterday, early in the morning, sitting in my chamber in examination, I could neither get bread, drink, nor fire of these knaves, till I was fretished, * and the abbot durst not speak to them. I called them all before me, and forgot *(sic)* their names, and took from every man his keys of his office, and made new offices for my time here, perchance as stark knaves as the other. It shall be expedient for you to give him a lesson and tell the poor fool what he should do amongst the monks."†

The kind of treatment, which the religious met with at the hands of this visitor sent to lead them to a better life, may be also gathered from his letters. In a letter from Bath, Layton speaks of his visit to a cell of Lewes priory, near that city, called Farley, where he had got information as to the sub-prior from "a fair young man, a priest late sent from Lewes," and adds, "I have matter sufficient here found (as I suppose) to bring the prior of Lewes into great danger."‡ The information, whatever it might be, thus obtained, was kept ready for the visitation of Lewes some months later. Layton thus describes it:—"At Lewes," he says, "I found the monks morally bad and traitors. The sub-prior confessed

* *i.e.*, numbed with cold. † Calendar, ix., No. 452.
‡ *Ibid.*, ix., No. 42.

unto me treason in his preaching, I have caused him to subscribe his name to the same submitting himself to the king's mercy. I have also *made him confess* that the prior knew the same and counselled it, and the sub-prior subscribed his name to this said confession against the prior." Upon this, the doctor summoned a chapter and put the unfortunate prior on his knees in the middle, and "I laid unto him the concealment of the treason, and called him *heinous traitor,* with *the worst words I could devise,* he all the time kneeling upon his knees, and making intercession unto me not to utter to you the premises. I listened to him, but ordered him to appear before you to answer on All Hallows eve in court, and perhaps before the king himself, and to bring his sub-prior. *You will be able to do what you like with him.*" * It does not require much imagination to see what the visitor means by Crumwell having the poor man in his power, to do what he "likes with him."

From Lewes, Layton goes to Battle abbey, to which he gives as bad a character as he had given to Lewes. He ordered the abbot, with whom he seems to have had some disagreement, into court. He also bespeaks Crumwell's attention to his case by the following description of the culprit:—"The abbot of Battle is the varaste hayne bette and buserde, and the arants chorle that ever I see. In all other places whereat I come, specially the black sort of devilish monks, I am sorry to know as I do. Surely I thynke they be

* *Ibid.*, No. 632.

paste amendement, and that God hath utterly wtdrawn his grace from them."

One more quotation from Layton's letters of this period is of interest, as it describes a fire at Canterbury. It happened when he was there and nearly terminated his career. "This Saturday at night I came to Canterbury, to Christchurch. At one of the clock after midnight one of my servants called me up suddenly, or else I had been burnt in my bed. The great dining chamber called the king's lodging, where we supped, and whereat the bishop of Winchester lay the day before I came, was suddenly fired by some fire-brand or snuff of some candle, that first set the rushes on fire. My servants lying nigh the said lodging were almost choked in their beds, and so called me. And anon, after I found a back door out, called up the house and sent into the town for help, and before ladders and water could be got that great lodging was past recovery and so was the chamber where I lay. Three chambers only are burnt, called the new lodging, or the king's lodging. The gable ends of the house, made of strong brick, kept in the fire from the houses adjoining, with the help of men, so that there is no harm done but in that lodging. As soon as I had set men to squench and to labour, I went into the church and there tarried continually, and set four monks with bandogs to keep the shrine, and put the sexton in the revestry there to keep the jewels, and walked continually in the church above and set monks in every quarter of

the church with candles, and sent for the abbot of Saint Augustine's to be there with me in a readiness to have taken down the shrine, and to have sent all the jewels into Saint Augustine's."*

No further harm was done than is described above, and nothing lost except such bedding as had been cast down into the cloister for safety, and was carried away by the poor people of Canterbury. The anxiety displayed by Layton for the safety of the magnificent shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, or rather for the precious stones with which it was adorned, is a manifestation of another phase of the visitation of 1535. The commissioners first endeavoured to find out at each monastery all there was of value. They next tried to get possession of it, just as the king had appropriated the jewelled cross of the church of Winchester. "I have crosses of silver and gold," writes the indefatigable Layton, "some of which I send you not now, because I have more that shall be delivered me this night by the prior of Maiden Bradley himself. To-morrow early in the morning I shall bring you the rest, when I have received all, and perchance I shall find something here" (St. Augustine's, Bristol).† There are rea-

* Calendar, ix., No. 669. In "the Chronicle of St. Augustine, Canterbury," Camd. Soc., "Narratives of the Reformation," p. 281, there is a record of a fire, at which Dr. Layton was present, on *October 16th*. This in 1535 was a Saturday, and probably refers to the same, as the chronicle says that the fire was "in this visitation" time.

† Wright, p. 59, Aug. 24th, 1535. It is worthy of note that the preamble of the act passed for the dissolution of the smaller

sons for suspecting a deeper meaning in this illegal spoliation of churches and monasteries. Their moveable property gone; their right to lease and sell their own put under restraint; impoverished by demands from king and courtier it was impossible or impolitic to refuse; their resources drained by blackmail levied upon them by Crumwell and his creatures, many houses were brought face to face with the alternative of starvation or surrender. For years many of the religious houses had been on the verge of ruin. To the requests of king and minister they had replied, by humbly begging to be allowed to keep some farm or some manor demanded of them, as necessary to support themselves and the poor who depended on them. The seizure of their treasures by Crumwell's agents and the heavy fees which these visitors charged for insulting and robbing them must, in the case of many, have completed their ruin and forced them to surrender.*

The visitation also had a most disastrous effect upon the internal life of the monasteries. No greater

monasteries in Feb., 1536, charges them with wasting the "*ornaments of their churches.*" We may see by the above how the ornaments were wasted; the charge was made, doubtlessly, to account for their disappearance.

* These facts are amply borne out by many letters of melancholy interest in the fifty-two volumes of Crumwell Correspondence in the Record Office and other MSS. of the period. It has been stated, with what amount of truth we are not prepared to say, that only 123 of the monasteries doomed for destruction were able to hold out until the act of suppression. *Cf.* Blunt's "Reformation of Ch. of Eng.," i., p. 301.

blow could have been struck at the whole theory of the religious life, than the interference with the vows contained in the order to dismiss those who were under twenty-four years of age, or who had been professed under the age of twenty. The visitors, it is clear, had no scruple about their power to dispense with the solemn obligations of the monastic profession. They freely extended it to any who would go, in the idea that the more they could induce to leave their convents the better pleased both the king and Crumwell would be. The order was ambiguous and led to disputes and difficulties. Legh complained of Layton "that he had not dismissed all those under the age of twenty-four," as he believed Crumwell intended. But Ap Rice, on account of his quarrel with Legh, had a scruple as to whether the practice of the latter in the matter was right. "I thought," he writes, "that you ordered that all who were between twenty-two and twenty-four should have leave to go from the religious life if they wished, but he only applies this to men," and "also he setteth a clause in his injunctions that they that will, of what age soever they be, may go abroad, which I heard not of your instructions."* That this was really the intention of Crumwell is more than probable. Stow records that they "put forth all religious persons that would go, *and* all that were under the age of twenty-and-four years," the superior being required to give each one so going "a priest's gown and forty

* Calendar, ix., No. 622.

shillings of money; the nuns to have such apparel as secular women wear, and to go where they will."

In September, 1535, Chapuys wrote: "there is a report that the king intends the religious of all orders to be free to leave their habits and marry. And that if they will stay in their houses they must live in poverty. He intends to take the rest of the revenue, and will do stranger things still."* The religious could not understand that the object aimed at was the destruction of their houses. Their simplicity excites a smile sometimes, as when "Jane Gowring, Frances Somer, Mary Pilbeam, Barbara Larke and Bridget Stravye, aged $23\frac{1}{2}$, 22, 21 and 15; the first three professed, but all put out of religion," beg that they may be allowed to stay in their beloved convent, and if this would not be allowed at least to wait in the "cloose howse" till they were above the age of 24, when they would be professed again.†

The immediate effect, therefore, of this visitation was to thin the monasteries of their inmates. In some instances only the old and infirm were left to keep up the practices of the religious life. Poor Margaret Vernon, prioress of Little Marlow, had her house almost emptied. "Your visitors," she writes to Crumwell, "have been here of late, who hath discharged three of my sisters. The one is dame Catherine, the other two are the young women, that

* Calendar, ix., No. 357.

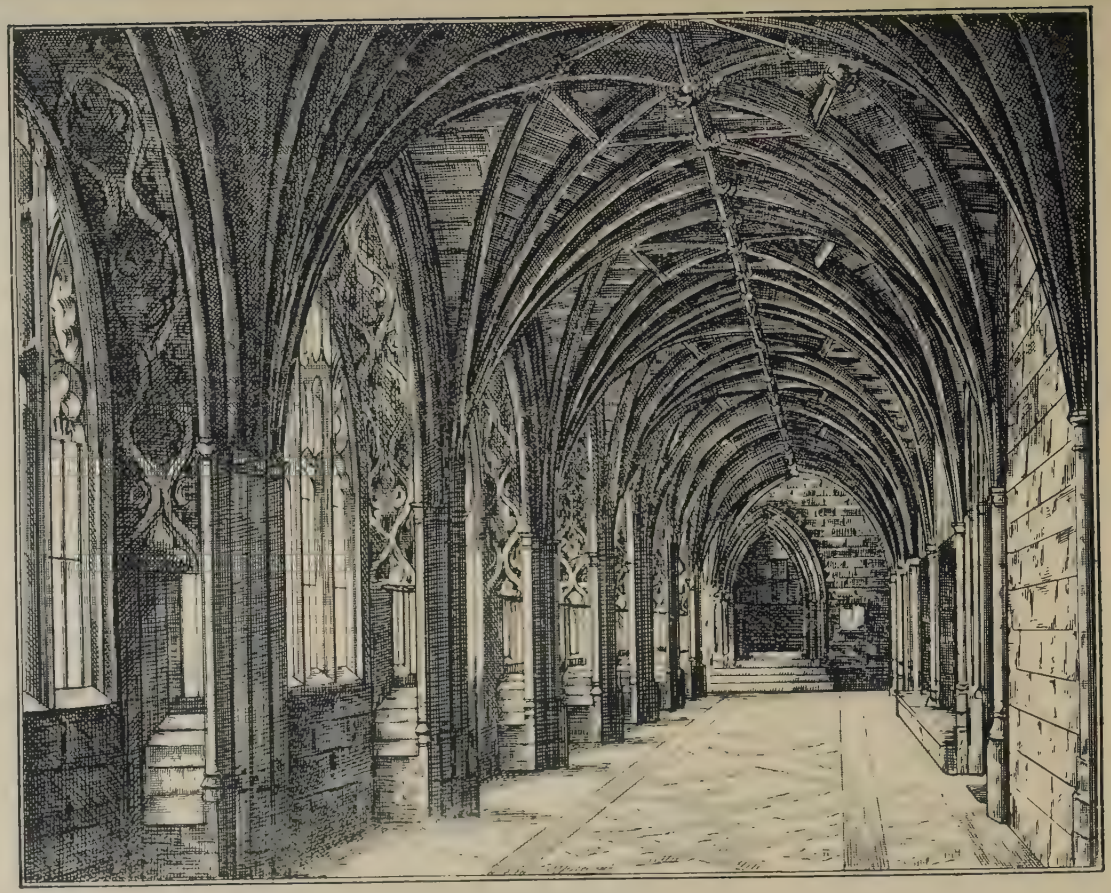
† *Ibid.*, No. 1075. It is very remarkable how few are represented in the visitors' reports as desirous of leaving the religious life. Of their personal petitions quite as many are to stay, as to leave.

were last professed, which is not a little to my discomfort. . I most humbly beseech you to be so special good master unto me, your poor bedewoman, as to give me your best advertisement and counsel, what way shall be best for me to take, seeing there shall be none left here but myself and this poor maiden."* Crumwell's advice appears to have been what might be expected from him. At any rate, she soon gave up her house. She is next found in London, trying to get an interview with Crumwell at the "Rolls" in order to make him keep his promise to provide for her. His servants will not allow her to see their master, and "the multitude of suitors" is so great that she cannot get a hearing. The king, she complains, has granted away the lease of her farm at Marlow, and she is in great "trouble and unquietness."† Crumwell generously offers to lend her £40 to defray her expenses at Stepney, provided she gives him *good security*. In the end she becomes governess to his son Gregory, of whom she writes: "Your son is in good health, and is a very good scholar, and can construe his *Pater noster*, *Ave* and *Credo*." The lot of the prioress of Little Marlow, hard though it was, must have been far easier than that of the multitude of poor nuns who were turned out into the world without support or friends.‡

* Wright, p. 55.

† R. O. Crumwell Corr., Vol. xlv., Nos. 43, 44, 45, 49.

‡ It is quite untrue that *all* religious were pensioned, small though that pension might have been. It can be shown from the



The Cloisters, Worcester Cathedral.

There are many examples, in the papers and letters of this period, of the difficulties religious superiors experienced in governing their houses at all, during these troubled days. They not only found the restrictions hard and even impossible to bear, but there was every inducement to their subordinates to rebel against an authority they had sworn to respect. Monks were encouraged and urged to turn informers against their brethren and superiors; malicious information sedulously fostered, became the seed of discord and unhappiness, which disturbed the peace of the cloister. The abbot of Breuern was thrice indicted at Oxford for preventing one of his monks going off to London to lay complaints before Crumwell.* John, abbot of Whitby, was much troubled about the same injunction and writes: "Also where I am bound by our injunctions to find everyone of my brethren horse and money to come to complain, when and how they shall think fit the injunctions violated, sir, for the love of God, consider the brittleness and lightness of some light persons, that sometimes complain without cause."†

Dan Peter, a monk of Winchcombe, wrote a letter of complaint about his abbot, the gist of which is that his superior wants to maintain discipline and he does not. He also hinted that the

"pension books," that only a small number ever had pensions at all. The young received none; the condition of the grant being "tempore dissolutionis et *diu antea*."

* B. Mus. Cott. MSS. Cleop., E. iv., fol. 120.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xlviii., No. 17.

abbot was a staunch supporter of the ancient faith.* Once before, one Andrew Saunders, curate at Winchcombe, had complained that this abbot was no friend to the new order of things. He had stopped payment to the schoolmaster of the grammar school, and would not allow him to help him in the Church.† The same abbot was troubled by another of his subjects, John Horwoode, otherwise Dan Placidus. This young man was very anxious "for the conversion of the people from papistical ways." He would like to see the chapter of Saint Paul ad Romanos, in which he says "*non est potestas nisi a Deo,*" written on every monk's head. And he suggests that Crumwell should compel his brethren more to uphold the king's supremacy. We are not surprised to find that he asks something for himself in return:— "Thanks," he says, "for excusing my getting up for matins at midnight. The abbot says this has given cause to some murmurs and grudging among the convent. The truth is, I do not like the burdens and straightness of religion, such as their accustomed abstinence, the 'frayter,'‡ and other observances of the rule."§

The neighbouring priory of Worcester furnishes another example of such troubles. John Musard, a

* Calendar, ix., No. 314.
† *Ibid.*, viii., No. 171.
‡ *i.e.*, the community recreations.
§ Calendar, ix., Nos. 321-2.

monk there, had been put in prison for some reason by his prior. Dr. Legh and William Petre came to visit the monastery, heard his complaint, and apparently decided against him; for Dan John writes in anger to Crumwell:—"If ever I were such an unreasonable creature as Master Dr. Legh and Mr. Petre say. I am *comperted** on because (of) my evil willers. It were pity of my life. Clearly to excuse myself I cannot, but naught (evil) I have done in times past and corrected therefore. Wherefore I desire your honourable mastership, that you will not accept their conspiring and false accusations in this time of visitation." In another letter he charges the visitors with having been bought to decide against him.† Dan William Fordham was another thorn in the side of the superiors of Worcester. He had been procurator of the convent, and was dismissed for extravagance and peculation.‡ The sub-prior, Dan Roger Neckham, was also dismissed from his office, and he, with Fordham, endeavoured to bring the prior into difficulty with Crumwell by charges made against him. In this they succeeded, and the government of the convent was handed over to the two refractory monks in spite of the protests of the community.§ The prior was put in prison at Gloucester with one of his

* *Comperted, i.e.*, reported.
† Calendar, ix., No. 497.
‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., i., No. 9.
§ Crum. Corr., *ut sup.*

monks, and although the chancellor, Sir Thos. Audeley, doubted whether any case of treason could be made out against them, he thought the best way was "to indict them and let them remain in ward."* Here they were left, although Lady Margery Sandys pleaded in the prior's favour, "that he was a true monk to God and the king," while the present ruler of Worcester, Neckham, bore the most indifferent character. She, however, rightly understood that more was to be hoped for from money than justice, and adds that "he will be glad to give you (Crumwell), in ready money, as much as any other man."† The vicar-general, however, had other letters urging the choice of various people to the office of prior, "soon to be void." John Gostwyk, his secretary, wrote that "Gresham will give you £100 and I £20 if you will make John Fulwell prior of Worcester."‡

"From specimens like these," writes the best authority on the public records of the time now living, "few as the cases may be that have come to light, we may form some estimate of the discord and demoralization created within the walls of monasteries by the proceedings of Crumwell's visitors. The wonder indeed is that the recorded cases are so few, and that, in spite of all the inducement offered under the new *régime* to appeal to the king's vicegerent or the visitors, there are not more frequent instances of such appeal being actually made—a fact which,

* Calendar, ix., No. 90. † *Ibid.*, No. 656.
‡ *Ibid.*, No. 184.

duly considered, seems to imply that the rule in most houses was far more wholesome and more willingly submitted to than many have been hitherto disposed to believe. Only here and there within the walls of some great abbey did some one or two of the more audacious monks brave the displeasure of their heads and the ill will of their brethren by malicious tale-bearing, though undoubtedly there were many refractory members, such as there must be in all large communities, who did not love the discipline imposed upon them."*

Another method adopted at this time by Crumwell to worry the monks, was the appointment of teachers or divinity lecturers in the monasteries. One of these unwelcome intruders, Anthony Saunder, writes to his master in November:—"Whereas you have appointed me to read the pure and sincere Word of God to the monks of Winchcombe. . I have small favour and assistance amongst these pharisaical papists. The abbot of Hailes, a valiant soldier under Antichrist's banner, resists much, fighting with all his might to keep Christ in the sepulchre. He has hired a great Goliath, a subtle *Duns* man, yea a great clerk, as he saith a Bachelor of Divinity of Oxford, to catch me in my sermons." The writer further desires Crumwell to appoint a convenient hour in the forenoon of each day for him to deliver his lectures to the monks, who manifest a greater love for their choir duties than he,

* Mr. J. Gairdner, *ibid.* Preface, p. xxiii.

Anthony Saunder, admires. "They will not come in due time; they set so much store by their popish services."*

Another example of the same kind of persecution is seen, somewhat later, in the case of Reading abbey. This, although already given in Strype and Burnet, bears repeating. According to instructions sent by Crumwell to the bishops, to have an eye to the monasteries in their districts,† Shaxton of Salisbury informed his master that there was a monk teaching theology to the religious at Reading, in a way calculated to keep up their adherence to the ancient faith, and particularly as regards their fidelity to the see of Rome. Thereupon he obtained an order to the abbot to appoint one of his own clerks to this office, since "it was not possible to have them to amend their judgments unless they have a better reader."‡ The abbot, of course, strongly resisted, on the ground that the abbey already had a capable lecturer, who was a graduate of Oxford, well versed in the Latin tongue and in the Holy Scriptures, and because the house could not "well afford the extra cost" of the appointed lecturer, who was to have "a convenient stipend and commons at the abbot's board." He had also this reason, that Richard Cobbes, the clerk recommended by Shaxton, had been priest and canon, "but was then married

* Calendar, ix., No. 747.

† Strype's "Ecc. Mems.," I. 1, p. 333 (ed. 1822).

‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xxxvii., No. 41.

and degraded, and thus a most dangerous man" to have in a religious community.*

We have very little information as to the misery and depth of anxiety, which must have prevailed in the cloisters of England during this period. Their forebodings and communings with themselves on the events that were taking place around them must have been sad enough. It requires little stretch of the imagination to picture the dismay and consternation with which the religious must have listened to the reports of violence and injustice, which were carried to them as the visitors proceeded with their work. For years they had endeavoured to buy off the fatal day of doom by plentiful bribes to Cromwell and his master. On what was left to them, they with difficulty supported their own existence and maintained the hospitality and relief of the poor which their traditional obligations required. One glimpse is given of the secret sorrows of the religious at this time, in the depositions made against the abbot of Woburn. When the report of the execution of the Charterhouse fathers reached the monastery, the abbot assembled his brethren in the chapter-house and, having recited the psalm *Deus venerunt gentes,* spoke thus:—

"Brethren, this is a perilous time. Such a scourge was never heard since Christ's passion. You have heard how good men do suffer death. My brethren, this is undoubtedly for our offences,

* *Ibid.*, Vol. xxxv., No. 18.

for ye have heard that so long as the children of Israel kept the commandments of God so long their enemies had no power over them, but God took vengeance of their enemies. But when they broke God's commands then they were subdued, and so be we. Therefore let us be sorry, and undoubtedly he will take vengeance on our enemies, these heretics who cause so many good men to suffer thus. Alas! it is a piteous case that so much christian blood be shed. Therefore, my good brethren, for the love of God, let everyone of you devoutly pray and say this psalm, *Deus venerunt,* &c., with the versicle, *Exurgat Deus,* &c., this same psalm to be said every Friday, immediately after the litany, prostrate when ye lie before the high altar, and doubt not God will allay this storm."*

The visitation of Henry's royal commissioners lasted till the meeting of parliament in February, 1536. The reports they furnished Crumwell seem to show that by no means all the religious houses were inspected and reported upon. Sufficient, however, had been done to serve the king's purpose. True or false, the tales the agents had to tell were used to induce the parliament to confiscate the property of the lesser monasteries. How this was accomplished, what the charges were which the visitors made against the monks, how far they can be relied upon, and what the characters of the accusers were, will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of this volume.

* R. O. State Papers, 1538, v. 114.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1536 AND THE SUPPRESSION OF THE LESSER MONASTERIES.

THE year 1536 opened with the death of the unfortunate queen Catherine. She had been poisoned, at least so thought Chapuys and others, if not at the instigation, at least with the connivance of Anne Boleyn.* The latter was not left long to enjoy her position. Already she had in great measure lost her hold over the affections of Henry, and for purposes of public or private policy Crumwell was secretly plotting her overthrow.† And thus, only four months after the grave had closed on the remains of her rival, Anne Boleyn was led out to the block on Tower Hill. Meantime Henry and his agents had been making preparations since the middle of the previous year for their first attack on the monasteries. This was delivered in the session of parliament, which commenced on the fourth day of February, 1536.

Layton and Legh had hurried from house to

* Friedmann's "Anne Boleyn," Vol. ii., cap. 14.

† *Ibid.*, p. 242. On a letter from Chapuys, June 6, 1536: "il se meist a fantaise et conspira le dict affaire."

house in the North of England, and had supplied their master, Crumwell, with their reports as to the religious and their property. Meeting at Lichfield on the 22nd of December, the colleagues took their way "to certain abbeys upon Trent side. And so," as they write, "to Southwell and to be at York within a day after the 12th day we intend, and thus to make speed with diligence and true knowledge of everything, is our intent."* On the 11th of January, Thomas Legh informed Crumwell that they had reached York and visited the archbishop.† They had ordered that prelate, he wrote, to appear before the vicar general with all the documents of his office, adding, "I do not doubt when you have read them, but that you shall see and *read many things worthy reformation, by the knowledge whereof I suppose the king's highness and you will be glad.*"‡

To have reached York from Lichfield in little more than a fortnight, and to have visited and examined the conventual establishments, which lay on their route as to property and morals, must have required all their "speed with diligence." The visitation, however, had to be practically finished, their report sent in to Crumwell and prepared for parliament within a period of six weeks from their starting on the tour. They had to journey in this time over the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, as well as through

* Layton to Crumwell. Wright, p. 94.
† Dr. Edward Lee.
‡ Legh to Crumwell. Wright, 96.

the entire province of York.* Hence dispatch was absolutely necessary. As their chief object, however, was certainly to point out, as in the case of the archbishop of York, "many things worthy reformation," so as to please Crumwell and his royal master, they had no need of lengthy examinations.

The rapidity of their tour, rendering investigation impossible, makes their *comperts* or reports utterly valueless. They prove, however, were proof needed, that these commissioners were ready to bring any accusation against the monks, and that the fair name of many, who possibly never heard anything of the matter, was blackened by mere reckless assertions. Just as Layton, in the southern monasteries "expected to find" all that his evil imagination pictured, so, from Yorkshire he wrote to Crumwell, "We find corruption amongst persons religious even like as we did in the south . . and worse, if worse may be, in kinds of knavery." He then proceeds to accuse them generally of the most revolting kind of immorality.† The sting of this condemnation is certainly somewhat destroyed by the knowledge that he could not have made any inquiry worthy of the name. By his own admission he finds only what he came to seek. "This day," he says, "we begin with St. Mary's abbey,‡ whereat we *suppose* to find much *evil dispo-*

* Comprising altogether eight counties. That this visitation was really made may be seen by the epitome of reports called "Comperta." Some 88 monasteries are reported on within the fortnight.

† Layton to Crumwell. Wright, 97, January 13, 1536.

‡ York.

sition, both in the abbot and the convent, *whereof, God willing, I shall certify you in my next letter.*"

The parliament, which had been adjourned from the previous November, met at Westminster on the 4th of February, 1536. The chief matter of business it had to transact, in this its last session, was the passing of an act to legalize the spoliation of monastic property, which had been already commenced in the previous autumn. The operation of this act of suppression was to be left to the interpretation of the conscience of Henry, and its provisions were to be carried out by Crumwell and his agents. By it, the revenues of abbeys and convents and the untold riches of their churches and shrines together with the patrimony of the poor passed, within the space of four years, into the possession of king and noble and were used as their own private property.

What is even more important is, that the act robbed the monasteries of England of their good name and affixed to them the stigma of evil repute. The transactions of this memorable session of parliament have been often appealed to, during the subsequent three and a half centuries, as proof positive that the religious houses of England had forfeited their right to protection against tyranny and spoliation, by the infamous character of the lives of their inmates. English writers have accepted, unquestioned, the story of what was done in the old Chapter house of the abbey of Westminster in the spring of 1536, at the passing of the act by

which the lesser monasteries were suppressed. Like most unsavory stories, this one has not lost in the telling. Englishmen, with all their native love of honesty and fair dealing, have thus by very custom come to believe implicitly in the general outlines of the narrative and to point to the fact of the destruction of the monasteries as sufficient indication of the cause.

The story, as for instance told in the pages of Green's "History of the English people," is generally accepted as true. "Two royal commissioners," he writes, "were dispatched on a general visitation of the religious houses, and their reports formed a 'black book,' which was laid before Parliament in 1536. It was acknowledged that about a third of the houses, including the bulk of the larger abbeys, were fairly and decently conducted. The rest were charged with drunkenness, with simony, and with the foulest and most revolting crimes. The character of the visitors, the sweeping nature of their report, and the long debate that followed on its reception, leaves little doubt that these charges were grossly exaggerated. But the want of any effective discipline, which had resulted from their exemption from all but papal supervision, told fatally against monastic morality even in abbeys like St. Albans."

A book of another kind, intended for the use of the young, gives much the same version. "The popular complaints," says professor Seebohm, "against them [the monasteries] were not found

to be baseless. Scandal had long been busy about the morals of the monks. The commissioners found them on inquiry worse even than scandal had whispered, and reported to parliament that two-thirds of the monks were leading vicious lives under cover of their cowls and hoods."*

When this is the story told by every writer, of great or small repute, who deals with the time, it is easy to account for the modern English views as to monks and nuns. Burnet's history, until the days of Mr. Froude's historical romances, was the storehouse from which most of the so-called facts were drawn. Hume, with scarcely any acknowledgment, and writing as if he had seen and examined the original documents, adopts Burnet's glosses and insinuations, and in many places his very words. So often has the tale been retold, that there is probably no part of the history of our country so universally accepted which rests on so slender a basis of fact. The account, quoted above from the pages of Mr. Green's admirable history, may be taken as a very fair sample of what is believed on all hands to be a moderate version of the reasons, which led to the greatest confiscation of property the world has ever seen. Yet in these lines, few as they are, there are some statements which are incapable of proof and others which are distinctly false and misleading. It is quite certain, for example, that more than two commissioners were employed in

* Epochs of Hist. "Era of Prot. Revolution," 1877, p. 186.

the work of visitation previous to the meeting of parliament. The records that exist make it likewise improbable, that "on the table of the Chapter house was placed the famous 'black book,' which sealed the fate of all the monasteries of England and sent a thrill of horror through the house of commons when they heard it."* Moreover, it is quite certain that the commissioners never "reported to parliament that two-thirds of the monks were leading vicious lives under cover of their cowls and hoods," and that parliament never declared, that "about a third" of the monasteries "were fairly and decently conducted."

In considering the action of parliament in this matter, it is necessary to bear in mind the nature of the assembly which handed over the property of the religious to their royal master. In the time of Henry VIII. the House of Commons was not really an elective body at all. The members represented the king rather than the people, and were in fact nominated by the crown. Together with the writ ordering the election, the sheriff received a letter mentioning the name of the candidate the king wished to be chosen.† The "free" electors, or as many as the sheriff in his discretion thought good to call, were summoned together and informed of the royal will and pleasure,

* Stanley's "Gleanings from Westminster Abbey," p. 425. Froude, "Hist.," iv., 520.

† See Friedmann's "Anne Boleyn," Vol. i., p. 100, &c.; there were "either no lists of electors or they were not regarded."

and as no opposition was of any use the royal nominee was declared chosen to represent the burgesses in parliament. To contest such a tyrannical abuse of power was impossible. Did anyone dare attempt to oppose the royal will he would in all probability be summoned before the council to explain such a rebellious disposition. If contumacious, he might quickly find himself in Newgate or the Marshalsea.

In the case of corporate towns, as we know from the case of Leicester, the election was practically in the hands of the town councils and other officials, and their members of parliament cannot be considered to have had much representative importance. The officials everywhere at this period were controlled by crown agents, and to all intents and purposes an election was a nomination.*

For this special House of Commons every attempt was made to secure members pliant to the king's will. Burnet observes that there had been great industry used in managing the elections,† and the chronicler Hall, that "most of the commons were the king's servants."‡ In fact, the members of this house of commons were about as "freely elected as the bishops."§ As Dr. Stubbs wri[illegible]s, "Henry had

* Bishop Stubbs' "Lectures," 1886, p. 2[illegible]

† *Cf.* Cobbett's "Parl. Hist.," i., p. 507.

‡ See H. Cole, "Henry VIII. Scheme of Bishopricks," 1838, in which several authorities are quoted to show this. In the B. Mus. Cott. MSS., Cleop., E. iv., fols. 176, 178, are two letters showing the care taken in selecting members in view of the suppression question.

§ Friedmann, Vol. i., p. 100.

clearly got a parliament on which he could depend, and every point now gained became a fresh vantage-ground from which he could grasp at more."*

There are many examples of the way in which the elections at this time were conducted. A certain Christopher More writes to Crumwell that he understands from the instructions he has sent him, that it is his pleasure to have some friend elected for Catton, in Surrey. It shall be as Crumwell wishes.† At an election for the city of Canterbury the mayor, by some mistake, did not receive the usual instructions at the same time as the writ. Without waiting, he assembled some seventy of the electors and chose two representatives. Crumwell was angry, and although the mayor pleaded that unfortunately the election was over, it was cancelled and two burgesses, "Robert Darknell and John Dryges," were returned "by the king's direction" in the place of the two formerly chosen.‡

The system of packing the houses of parliament in order to further the king's wishes was carried out very completely, as Mr. Friedmann points out,§ at the time of the attack on the supremacy of the pope. It was practically this same assembly, which was asked to decide against the monasteries and to hand over their property to the royal treasury.

* "Lectures," 1886, p. 276.

† R. O. Crum. Corr. xxix., 19.

‡ *Ibid.*, v., Nos. 102, 104, 108. See also Friedmann, *ut sup.*

§ "Anne Boleyn," i., p. 195.

Every artifice had to be used to carry the supremacy question in the lords. "The house of lords," writes Chapuys, "has been carefully packed, many of the members having received no writs, others having been excused from attending."* The same account is given by Dr. Richard Hyliard, who was secretary to bishop Tunstall, of Durham. "In summoning this parliament," he says, "the greatest care was taken that only those should come to it who were favourable to the king's wishes," and members were chosen according to the royal commands. In the house of lords anyone who was thought likely to oppose these designs "was ordered to remain at home" on some pretence or other. "In order to show," he continues, "that what I state I have not learnt from mere rumour, but from knowledge, know that I was at that time in the household of Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of Durham, who because he was a most learned and upright man was considered likely to stand out against the king's unjust desires. Wherefore when we were on our road, and not far from London where the parliament was to be held, Crumwell, who then managed everything under the king, sent the bishop a letter. In this, after a long account of the king's special affection for the bishop, it was stated that on account of the inclemency of the weather, the severity of the winter and the difficulty of travelling, a journey to a man of the bishop's age would be almost insupportable."

* March 31, 1533. Quoted by Friedmann, *ut sup.*

The king's affection had, therefore, prompted him to send the bishop permission to stay away. Tunstall was in great doubt what he ought to do. He had no wish to be absent and thus allow the king's creatures to have it all their own way, but he feared to disobey the royal wishes. While he hesitated "behold the next day another letter, not now from Crumwell but from the king himself, arrived, which not only allowed but ordered him to return at once to his diocese. I relate this here," says Hyliard, "to show by what machinations and deceits the designs which could not be accomplished by law, order or reason were brought to pass. Nor was there less deception when parliament was sitting in the voting than was used in summoning it."*

The spiritual peers, at the beginning of Henry's reign, consisted of the two archbishops, 19 bishops and 28 abbots. To these the king added the abbot of Tewkesbury in 1512, the abbot of Tavistock in 1514 and the abbot of Burton in 1534. In its

* B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152, fol. 312 d, "Verum in hoc concilio," etc. Hyliard is not mentioned by Tanner or Dodd; his work must have been in the hands of those who put forth the Roman edition of Sanders, 1586 (see p. 188). From the fragment contained in the Arundel MS. it was evidently a history of his own times, considerable in extent. The author was in a position to obtain the best information. The extreme anxiety of the King and Crumwell (apparent in many letters and documents to which subsequent reference will be made) to seize his person shows the importance they attached to keeping him silent. After his escape he was attainted by act of parliament. In these circumstances it is to be desired that this lost (and hitherto forgotten) history should be recovered.

greatest strength, about the year 1534, there were 52 peers spiritual. These were subsequently reduced to 29, on the dissolution of the greater monasteries. The lay peers varied from 36 to 51. And although the spiritual peers were thus in a majority, until the "dissolution" the journals show that "on the most critical occasions"* there were "about 20 abbots and bishops to 30 lay lords," and that the absent members did not vote by proxy.† It would seem, moreover, that when any government measure was introduced into the house of peers no division was taken, or indeed permitted. Those who were present were counted as supporters of the measure and all who did not wish to vote for the bill obtained the royal leave to be absent.

The commons, certainly, had no wish to vote the act of royal supremacy, and to ensure its passing the ministers had to employ every artifice for three weeks. The same plan was adopted to pass it through convocation. The 119 clergy, who attended the sitting, voted by proxy for 200 more who were not present. In some instances blank forms were sent by members of the house of lords to Crumwell to insert whatever name he liked to act as proxy.‡ Even Dr. Layton did not dare to come to the upper house of convocation, to which he had been appointed, without first writing to Crumwell for

* Bishop Stubbs' "Lectures," xii.

† Hook, "Lives," Vol. viii., pp. 38-9.

‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., xix., 58. Lord la Warre to Crumwell.

his permission. "If you so please," he writes, "I should like to be there for my erudition and knowledge, there to hear the great reasons of noble and wise men," but he diplomatically adds, that must be "as you wish."*

In 1536 the abbots formed a very strong party in the house of lords. They numbered 31 out of the 52 spiritual peers. At one time the king seems to have contemplated more decisive measures to prevent their opposition to his scheme of "dissolution," than allowing them to absent themselves from their places in parliament. In November, 1535, Chapuys† wrote, that the king intended to exclude them altogether, for fear of their opposition to his intentions as regards the spoliation of the monasteries, and that a decree to that effect had already been prepared.

No better picture can be given of the obsequiousness and venality of the lords and commons in Henry's reign than the words of Hallam convey. "Both houses of parliament," he writes, "yielded to every mandate of Henry's imperial will; they bent with every breath of his capricious humour; they were responsible for the illegal trials, for the iniquitous attainders, for the sanguinary statutes, for the tyranny which they sanctioned by law, and for that which they permitted without law. Nor was this selfish and pusillanimous subserviency more characteristic of the minions of Henry's favour—the

* *Ibid.*, xx., 30.

† Calendar, ix., No. 732.

Crumwells, the Ryders, the Pagets, the Russells, and the Pauletts. The representatives of ancient and honourable names, such as the Norfolks, the Arundels, the Shrewsburys, were the supporters of the king's policy. We trace these noble statesmen concurring in all the inconsistencies of the reign and supporting all the changes of religion, constant only in the rapacious acquisition of estates and honours from whatever source and in adherence to the present power.* Henry VIII. hated all Parliaments just as much as Charles I. and his minister, Lord Strafford. The Tudor tyrant carried out his plans by a code of pains and penalties so horrible as to affright every class of society, and when the nation became reduced to this abject and cowardly condition the king imbrued his hands in the best blood of the land, and he plundered his subjects on a scale never before known in any civilized country."†

The commons, during what is known as the refor-

* Henry VIII. employed towards the nobility a different policy to his father, who had depressed them. The streams of royal favour under Henry VIII. swept countless favours to those who gained his attention, such as wealthy marriages, gifts out of royal domains or confiscated properties, and, after the monasteries were suppressed, a share in the spoils. Not the least curious of these grants to courtiers were annuities out of episcopal sees or monastic revenues. Instances of the latter are numerous; of the former an act, which confirmed to the duke of Norfolk and six others, annuities out of the see of Winchester is a well-known example. By another act, the duke of Suffolk, the earl of Sussex, and lord Fitzwalter had grants confirmed out of the see of Norwich. See Amos, "Statutes of H. VIII.," p. 4.

† "Constit. Hist. of Eng.," Vol. i., p. 51.

mation parliament, numbered two hundred and ninety-eight members. A glance at the returns will show that they represented some counties according to such remarkable disproportion as to plainly indicate divisions, in correspondence to royal influence. "As to parliamentary elections," writes an authority on the statutes passed in this reign, "we find many instances throughout the reign of Henry VIII. of the direct interference of the government, and of bishops or of peers connected with the court, who were possessed of extensive domains. We read, for example, a letter in Ellis' *Collections,* from lord Dacre of the north to Wolsey, noticing an order from the king for his brother to be elected a knight of the shire of Cumberland, and begging to have him excused. He beseeches that 'it would like his grace to suffer Mr. Heneage or such one of your servants to be in his room as your grace shall nominate.' Mr. Hallam adduces a letter from Sir Robert Sadler, informing a person that the duke of Norfolk had spoken to the king, who was well content he should be a burgess for Oxford, and that he should 'order himself in the said room according to such instructions as the said duke of Norfolk should give him from the king. .' In the session of parliament next preceding the meeting of the reformation parliament there arose a debate upon a subsidy which had been demanded of unprecedented amount. A letter in Ellis' *Collections*, communicates to the earl of Surrey that 'yesterday, the *more* part, *being the*

king's council, the king's servants and gentlemen, gave the king his subsidy,' and that the minority had been *'spoken with and made to say yea, it may fortune contrary to their heart, will, and conscience.'* "*

The parliament, thus so carefully selected for the king's purposes in 1529, met to deal with the monasteries in their last session on February 4th, 1536. The early days of the session having been occupied with other business, the bill for the suppression of the smaller monasteries was brought up to the house about the beginning of March. Unfortunately the journals of both houses of parliament for this and the next year are missing, and we have little to rely upon, for the history of this session, but the preamble of the act itself. This is to be the more deplored, as preambles are not entirely to be trusted.† That the bill was a government measure is not to be doubted. In all probability it was brought up to the house by the king in person, for such bills were frequently forwarded a stage by the personal interference of the king. It is not unlikely that the following extract from a letter written at this period refers to the royal visit. "On Saturday in Ember week the king's grace came in among the burgesses of the parliament, and delivered them a bill and bade them look upon it and weigh it in conscience. He would

* Amos, "Statutes of H. VIII.," Introd., p. 5.

† "If preambles to acts of parliament were to be accepted as trustworthy evidence as to facts they recite, English history would be a very strange tale—even stranger than it appears in Mr. Froude's pages."—Friedmann's "Anne Boleyn," ii., p. 352.

not, he said, have them pass it, nor any other thing, because his grace giveth in the bill, but they to see it if it be for the commonweal to his subjects and have an eye thitherward. And on Wednesday* next he will be there again to hear their minds." †

The preamble of the act proves beyond doubt that the king did pay a visit to the House on the introduction of this "bill." It says, that the discussion was preceded by what is called a "declaration" by the king, as to the meaning and necessity of the proposed measure. It asserts that, "In consideration of (the evil lives of those in the smaller monasteries) the *king's most royal majesty . . . having knowledge* that the premises be true as well by the *compertes*‡ of his late *visitation* as by sundry *credible informations,* considering also that divers and great solemn monasteries of this realm, wherein, thanks be to God, religion is right well kept and observed, be destitute of such full numbers of religious persons as they ought and may keep, hath thought good that a plain *declaration* should be made of the premises as well to the lords spiritual and temporal as to other his loving subjects the commons in this present parliament assembled. Whereupon the said lords and commons by a *great deliberation* finally be resolved, that it is and shall be

* In 1536 Easter fell on April 16th, and Ember Saturday on March 11th.

† Wright, p. 36. Thomas Dorset, curate of St. Margaret's, Lothbury, to the mayor and others of Plymouth, March 13.

‡ Printed in Wright, p. 107.

much more to the pleasure of Almighty God" that the property of these religious "should be converted to better uses, and the unthrifty persons so spending the same be compelled to reform their lives."* And therefore they pray the king to take all the property of monasteries having an income under £200 a year.

From this preamble (which, it must be remembered, is practically all that is known about the measure) it would seem that parliament had no written documents placed before it, upon which to form any independent judgment as to the justice of the act they were asked to pass. The king, we are told, made a "full declaration" of what *he* knew to be true from the reports of the visitors and other sources. Upon this, after "a great deliberation," the members acted. Whether the report of the visitors in any shape was also submitted to their examination will probably never be ascertained with certainty. Sanders, it is true, speaks of the "publication of the enormities,"† but this might only refer to the king's "declaration." Bishop Latimer, who was possibly present in the house of lords, also says:—"when their enormities were first *read* in the parliament house, they were so great and abominable that there was nothing but down with them, but within a while after the same abbots were made bishops, for the saving of their pensions."‡ This is about the

* H. VIII., cap. 28. The word used on the parliamentary roll, is "*compertes*," which were the visitors' reports.

† "Schism," Lewis' translation, p. 129.

‡ Two sermons before Ed. VI. Parker Society ed., Vol. i., p. 123.

only authority for the statement that any such document as the famous "Black Book" was ever presented to parliament. The first mention of the name "Black book" occurs in a document called a declaration of the "mode of dissolving the abbeys." It is supposed to have been made for the information of Queen Elizabeth. "This appeared in writing," the author asserts, "with the names of the parties and their facts. This was showed in parliament and the villanies made known and abhorred."* The villanies "made known and abhorred" (at least as to murders and forging of deeds and the number of those implicated) are certainly not borne out by any known letters or reports of the visitors, of which a great many are still in existence. It may be justly asked

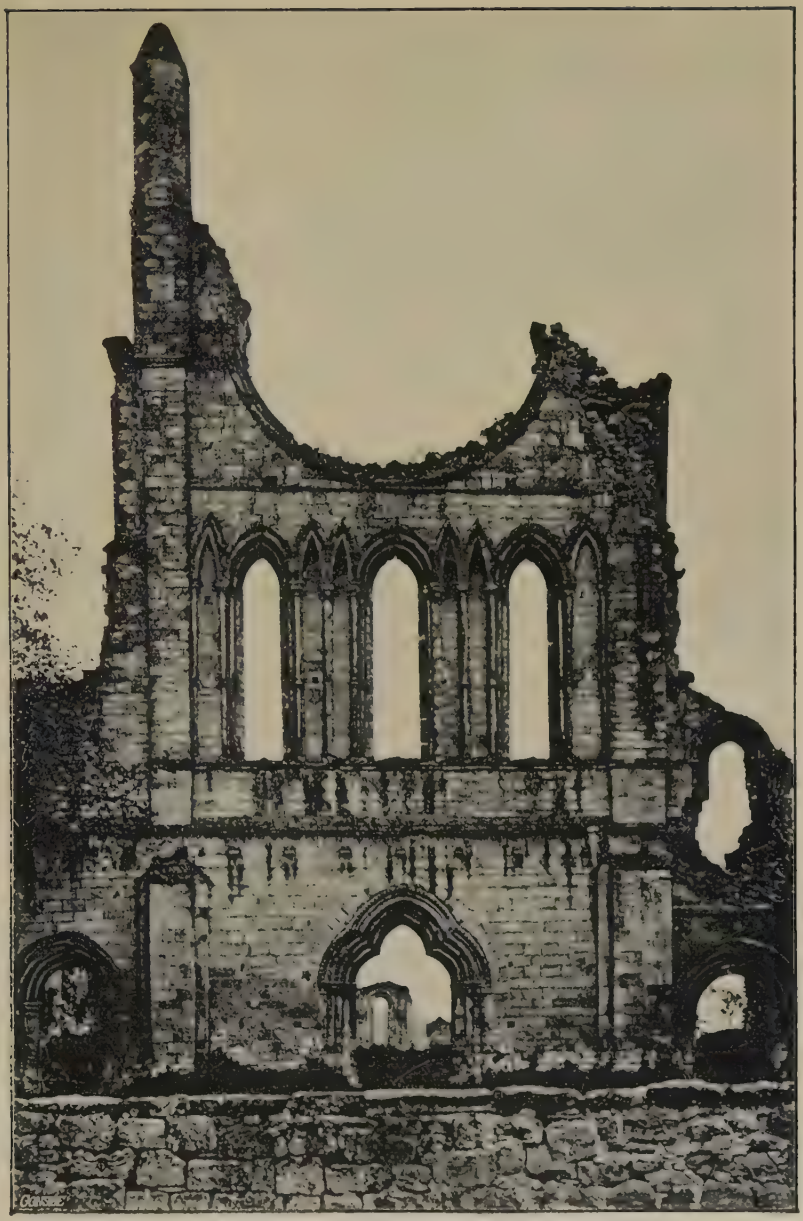
* B. Mus. Cot. MSS. Titus, F. iii., fol. 266, printed by Wright, p. 114. The "vile lives and abominable facts in murders of their brethren," in unnatural sins, "in destroying of children, in forging of deeds and other infinite horrors of life, in so much that dividing all the religious persons in England into three parts two of these parts at least" were guilty of sins against nature. As this is the most important document on which is based the venerable tradition that the Black Book was laid before parliament it may be well to observe, in addition to what is said in the text: (1) that from an expression at the beginning it is clear the writer does not make his statement on inspection of records (he imagines that Wolsey's suppressions may have had the pope's approval, but is quite ignorant of the fact): (2) he clearly does not speak from personal knowledge of what passed in parliament: (3) as to the date of the document, all that Mr. Wright can say is that "it appears to have been written in the time of queen Elizabeth." This nameless, dateless production has not therefore even the value of sub-contemporary evidence; and in itself, apart from the use made of it, is not worth even the trouble of this note.

what reliance can be placed upon this account as a history of the event. It moreover professes to be no more than a recollection of what took place, and does not distinguish between the two acts of suppression by which the lesser and greater monasteries were destroyed.

If this "Black book" was presented to parliament, as is so constantly asserted, nothing has since been seen of it. To explain the disappearance of this most important document, a theory started, as far as can be ascertained by the ingenious Burnet, explains that the catholics destroyed this dreadful indictment against the monks during the reign of queen Mary. Their object was to get rid of this damning evidence of the corruption of the monastic system. Burnet bases his assertion* on a commission issued in the fourth year of Mary's reign to Bonner bishop of London, Henry Cole dean of St. Paul's and others, to examine into the documents "*compertes, bokes, scroles, &c.*," and also into "sundry and divers infamous scrutinies taken in abbeys and other religious houses tending rather to subvert and overthrow all good religion and religious houses than for any truth contained therein." The commissioners are ordered to get these documents together, "that the said writings and other the said premises be *brought to knowledge,* whereby they may be considered, read and ordered according to our will and pleasure."† They are further

* "History of the Reform." (ed. Pocock), ii., p. 547.

† Dec. 29, 1556, Rot. Pat., 3 and 4 Phil. and Mary. Pars 12 m. (21), 30 d., printed in Burnet's "Records," ii., No. 28.



Byland Abbey, Yorkshire.

commanded to make their report to cardinal Pole. It is obvious that this commission is one of inquiry. There is not one word in the document to justify the assertion that it was one of destruction. Nevertheless, Burnet says he "soon knew which way so many writings had gone," when he saw the commission. The authority of the late Mr. Brewer may be given for the assertion that there is no trace among the records of this period of any such systematic destruction.*

If the book ever existed, its loss, whether destroyed on purpose or by accident, is greatly to be deplored. It is, however, obvious that the cause of the monasteries would be ill-served by the destruction. On the other hand, when uncorroborated charges had been made to serve their purpose against the monastic houses, when the spoils of sacred shrines and consecrated cloisters had been allowed to minister to the vices of the monarch or to replenish the empty purses of his corrupt courtiers, the sooner the evidence, upon which such destruction and spoliation had been wrought, was destroyed the better for the reputation of those who had profited by it. A modern Church of England authority writes:—"If I could visit the island of Glubbdubdrib, and wanted to know what became of this 'declaration' or 'black

* Dixon's "Hist. of Church of England," Vol. i., p. 342. "Mr. Froude, with his usual disregard of facts, says 'The report itself is no longer extant. Bonner was directed by Queen Mary to destroy all discoverable copies of it, and his work was fatally well executed'"!!!

book,' I should call up the ghost of Crumwell to tell me: that is supposing such a document ever existed."*

For three centuries and a half the imaginations of writers hostile to the monastic institutions have supplied the details of the missing document. Even the most honest historians have neglected to distinguish between what is mere conjecture and what is certain. Dr. Lingard, for example, states "that from their (the visitors') reports a statement was compiled and laid before parliament, which, while it allotted the praise of regularity to the greater monasteries, described the less opulent as abandoned to sloth and immorality."† It is, however, by no means certain that any "statement was compiled" from the reports of the visitors, still less that it was laid before parliament. On the other hand, it is expressly stated that the king's information was based on other "credible informations" besides the "accounts of his late visitation." And certainly from what we know of the royal agents and their methods, it is most unlikely that they would give the "praise of regularity" even to the greater monasteries.

From the records of this event it would seem therefore to be tolerably certain, that the visitors made their reports to Crumwell and in no sense to the houses of parliament. That Crumwell had an abstract of these reports prepared from time to time

* Canon Dixon, Vol. i., p. 342 note.

† "History," Vol. vi. (3rd Ed.), p. 298.

is more than probable,* and that they were gathered together into one book not unlikely. That they formed, however, a volume called the "Black book" and were in this way laid before the parliament cannot be proved, and on the evidence of the "preamble" of the act itself would appear unlikely. One thing seems to be certain: there was no attempt made to inquire into the truth of the charges suggested in the king's declaration. They were accepted on *his authority,* who had "knowledge that the premises were true."

The preamble† of the act of suppression commences by stating, that "manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living is daily used and committed commonly" in religious houses of *less than twelve* in number, "*whereby* the governors of such religious houses and their convent spoil, destroy, consume, and utterly waste" their property "as well as the ornaments of their churches" and other goods. On

* Ap. Rice, one of the visitors, says he made this "Breve docket."

† Amos, "Statutes H. VIII.," p. 9 notes. "With regard to the *facts* detailed in *preambles*, their veracity will derive no support from a coincidence with State papers, such as confessions, depositions, verdicts, judgments, reports, provided both the preambles and such documents should appear to be the productions of the same laboratory, the handiwork of the same craftsmen. Such a coincidence might be anticipated if the king, by his subservient agents, stretched racks, examined prisoners, transcribed and read evidence, empannelled and reformed the pannels of juries, directed and terrified the *twelve*, pronounced criminal and ecclesiastical judgments, wove the tissue of vilifying reports, and, afterwards, summed up the results in preambles."

the face of it, it is absurd to suppose that the serious charges here brought against the monasteries could be confined to those houses, which had less than twelve inmates. The limit was very probably suggested to the framers of the measure by the terms of the papal bull of 1528, authorizing cardinal Wolsey to suppress certain houses for the establishment of his colleges. This bull provided, that the religious in these monasteries be less in number than twelve and be transferred to the larger monasteries. Such a limit, however, is made ridiculous, when it is set as the line of demarcation between virtue and vice.*

The records of the visitation, which was the forerunner of this act, show who were the real "spoilers and destroyers" of the monastic treasuries. Those who, like Layton, "had packed up the stuff as the monks had," and the "crosses of silver and gold," intending to "bring you (Crumwell) the rest when I have received all," or the king who had taken a fancy to possess himself of the jewelled cross from the cathedral priory of Winchester, were best able to know that the religious houses were being spoiled of their "ornaments." The clause, as it stands in the preamble, seems to have no other object than to cover the fact of the disappearance from the monastic treasuries of valuables, which had already

* *Vide* Amos, "Statutes H. VIII.," p. 301. The number 12 was probably introduced *ad captandum*. It is never again referred to in the enacting clauses. It may have been thought that *numbers* could not be diminished so plausibly as *values*.

found their way into the king's possession through the hand of his visitors, or had been appropriated to their own private purposes.*

The professed desire of the king to reform the inmates of the smaller monasteries by sending † them to the greater houses, "where they may be compelled to live religiously for the reformation of their lives," was not carried out in practice. Wholesale dispensations from the solemn obligations of the religious vows had already been granted to such as desired freedom. A priest's or layman's gown, with forty shillings out of the plunder of their own property, on being turned out into the world to live as best they might, was the usual form of "reforma-

* Amos, "Statutes H. VIII.," p. 309, says:—"It would appear that, with regard to their (the monastic) personal property, and such of their possessions as were capable of rapine or destruction, a great part of the damage they received was done them, under colour of the visitations, before any dissolution act had passed."

† This provision is also taken from the bull of 1528. How anxious Henry really was for the religious reformation of the monasteries may be judged from a letter written by Chapuys to the Emperor, on July 31, 1531. "At the request of the abbots of this country," he writes, "and by the advice and order of the General Chapter of the Order of Cisteau, there has come to this city an abbot of Chalon, *(sic)* a very learned and virtuous monk, for the purpose of visiting the monasteries of his order in this country, which are in great need of inspection. But notwithstanding the manifold juridical reasons and the right he had to undertake the said visit, as he himself told the nuncio and me when dining at my hotel, the king has never allowed him to make the said visitation, alleging that no one had a right to interfere in the affairs of his kingdom, saying that he was at once King, Emperor (and if I recollect right) Pope also in his dominions."—Spanish St. Papers, iv., No. 775.

tion" adopted to get rid of the monks from their homes and to get possession of their coveted property. Nevertheless, the same professed desire for perfect religious life and the spiritual welfare of the monastic establishments is repeated in another part of the preamble, where it is suggested that the ejected religious would go to raise the numbers in the "great, solemn monasteries wherein (thanks be to God) religion is right well kept and observed."

It is, moreover, well to note the only kind of reformation attempted by the king or his agents during the six months which preceded the passing of this act. It was the forcible suppression of several small monasteries, the seizure of their possessions, and the violent laying of hands on the treasures of others. In the enacting clauses of the bill, also, the number of the religious to be found in the monasteries is not laid down as the limit to mark them for dissolution or preservation, but a money value of under £200 a year. The monasteries were, moreover, given to the king and his heirs only in "as ample a manner" as they were possessed by the religious superiors. These were trustees for common purposes and never regarded their property in any other light than as held for the support of religion and the poor. Further, the purpose, for which the monastic property was diverted by this act from its possessors and given to the king, is stated to be "that his highness may lawfully give, grant, and dispose them, or any of them, at his will and pleasure *to the honour of God and the wealth of this realm.*"

However uncertain and vague the terms of this grant may appear, they can hardly be supposed to comprehend those purposes, private, secular and even vicious upon which Henry squandered the property thus obtained. It was ordered, also, that the king should provide occupation and pensions for the monks not transferred to other monasteries. It was further enacted, that on the site of every dissolved religious house the new possessor should be bound under heavy penalties to provide hospitality and service for the poor, such as had been given them previously by the religious foundations. By this provision not only is the patrimony of the poor recognized as being merged in the property of the monasteries, but a testimony is afforded as to the way the religious had hitherto discharged their obligations in this respect. The repudiation of these rights of the needy, by those who became possessed of the confiscated property, is one of the greatest blots on our national history. It has caused the spoliation of monastery and convent to be regarded as the rising of the rich against the poor.

In the commons, there are some signs of opposition to the act of suppression, which made legal, but by no means just, this plunder of monastic property. The "preamble" of the act speaks of a "great deliberation" which preceded the final vote, and Sir Henry Spelman, who no doubt gave the traditional account of the matter, says:—"It is true the parliament gave them to him, but so unwillingly (as I have heard) that when the bill had stuck long in the

lower house and could get no passage, he commanded the commons to attend him in the forenoon in his gallery, where he let them wait till late in the afternoon, and then coming out of his chamber, walking a turn or two among them, and looking angrily on them, first on the one side and then on the other at last, 'I hear' (saith he) 'that my bill will not pass, but I will have it pass, or I will have some of your heads,' and without other rhetoric or persuasion returned to his chamber. Enough was said, the bill passed, and all was given him as he desired." *

It has always been stated that the abbots of the greater monasteries, who sat in parliament, to save their own abbeys did not hesitate to vote for the suppression of the less powerful houses. Hall in his Chronicle says, that "in this time was given unto the king, by the consent of the great, fat abbots, all religious houses that were of the value of 300 marks and under, in hope that their great monasteries should have continued still. But even at the time one said in the parliament house that these were the thorns, but the great abbots were the putrified old oaks, and they must follow. And so will other do in Christendom, quoth Dr. Stokesley, bishop of London, or many years be passed." † As stated above, there does not appear to have ever been any actual voting in the upper house. Consequently all that the

* "Hist. of Sacrilege," ed. 1853, p. 206. Spelman was born in 1562, less than thirty years after the event.

† "Union," ed. 1548, fol. 227 d.

mitred abbots would have done, was to have been present during the passing of the bill. Probably those that were there had no choice in the matter. It is, moreover, certain that the king had grave fears that the opposition of these parliamentary abbots would defeat his intended spoliation, and that to prevent them "parrying the blow in store for them" and "complaining of the innovations introduced in their convents," he had prepared to exclude them from parliament altogether.* His intention, however, was not carried out, although there is reason to suppose that many of the abbots were excused from attending this session of parliament. This was the ordinary way by which the success of a measure was ensured at this time. Such an indulgence really meant a command to abstain from appearing at Westminster. After the recent experience of the "great and fat abbots" in the visitation of their monasteries, they could hardly have trusted much to the king's good intentions in their regard. We may at least credit them with as much foresight as Stokesley, the bishop of London is said to have possessed, and not believe that they deluded themselves with any vain hopes of saving their own existence by the sacrifice of their weaker brethren.

Henry and his minister Crumwell appear to have been the first English rulers who realized the immense power of public opinion, and who endeavoured by definite and elaborate measures to educate it. Every

* Spanish State Papers, Vol. v., No. 221.

effort was made to influence the people, by means of preachers selected for their known adherence to the policy of the king, and by stage plays and interludes, often acted in the very churches. These represented "the immoralities and disorders of the clergy" and "the pageantry of their worship," by which they "encouraged them all they could" to adopt their freedom of thought and contempt of religion.*

In the June of the previous year (1535) Chapuys had described the personal interest the king took in these plays. Henry, he says, had gone thirty miles, walking ten of the distance at two o'clock in the morning, in order to be present at a representation of a chapter of the Apocalypse. He had taken up his position in a house from which he could observe everything, "but was so pleased to see himself represented as cutting off the heads of the clergy, that in order to laugh at his ease, and encourage the people he discovered himself."† Three years later, the French ambassador, Marillac, writing to his master describes a pageant of much the same character enacted on the Thames in the presence of Henry and a large concourse of people. Two large boats, filled with the actors, engaged in a sham battle. The men in the one were dressed to

* See Blunt's "Reform.," p. 273, note. "The horrible coarseness of such representations; the immorality and blasphemy of parodizing the H. Eucharist in the very house of God itself seem not to have struck these writers" (*i.e.*, Foxe and Burnet).

† Calendar, viii., No. 949.

represent the pope and his court of cardinals, those in the other the king and his nobles. The latter overcame the former, and the pope and his followers were thrown into the river. No wonder the ambassador thought so little of the performance.*

The pulpit had been already used for the purpose of attacking the papal supremacy and instructing the people in the principles of revolt against authority.† Cranmer, whom Chapuys considered a kind of antipope ‡ set up by Henry, used his short-lived supreme spiritual authority to revoke the licences of the preaching clergy. He granted his permission only to those whom he could trust to speak against the authority of the see of Rome. § For the purpose of more easily controlling the teaching of the people, all sermons and instructions in the ordinary parish churches were forbidden to be given after nine o'clock in the morning. At that time the services were to be finished, so "that then the curates, with the parishes, might come to Paul's cross and hear the preachers." These sermons were specially named as occasions when there was to be set forth the doctrine directed by the Privy Council. Moreover, a minute of the council strictly

* "Inventaire Analytique des archives du Ministére des affaires etrangéres," ed Jean Kaulek, No. 123, June 20th, 1539. He considered the spectacle had "paouvre grace et beaucoup moindre invention."

† Privy Council Memoranda, anno 1533, State Papers, Vol. i., 411.

‡ Calendar, Vol. vii., No. 14.

§ *Ibid.*, No. 463.

commands the mayor, aldermen, and common council of London "liberally to speak at their boards" on this matter, and instruct their servants in the same, while provincial officers and the gentry are to see that their families "bruit the same in all places where they shall come."*

Even adverse opinions of private individuals were not to be tolerated if discovered. For this purpose a system of espionage was established in free England, which allowed no one to feel secure. The rich noble and the poor apprentice were equally unable to express their convictions except at their peril. Lord Hussey had to excuse himself to the tyrant minister for a conversation held at his table three years previously, in which a priest was blamed for irreverently preaching against the Blessed Virgin.† Richard Hill, also, the poor apprentice of a city merchant, had to fly over the seas for defending the catholic doctrine of the necessity of good works, in a controversy with a young companion. The views of this youth were reported to the bishop of London, and on his refusal to retract, his master, who did not dare to furnish him with any money, advised him to fly beyond the seas. From Rouen he wrote to Crumwell to beg that at least what he had done might bring no harm to his parents or his master.‡

* Reminiscences of John Louthe, printed in "Narratives of the days of the Reformation," Camden Soc., p. 23.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xviii., No. 34.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 78.

At a time when no individual was allowed to have an opinion of his own on the policy of the government, or, indeed, even on the faith of his forefathers, the influence of public preaching was necessarily most powerful in directing popular feeling and sympathy. No sooner, therefore, was the suppression of the monasteries determined upon, and the arrangements for effecting it complete, than the machinery of the public pulpits was set in motion to endeavour to forestall popular discontent. Coarse invective and unscrupulous insinuation, it was hoped, might alienate the affection of the people from the monks. In pursuance of this object Crumwell sent forth three kinds of preachers to attack the monastic institutions. "One sort must be railers against religious men, calling them hypocrites, sorcerers, crooked necks, slowbellies, idle drones, abbey lubbers, plants which the Heavenly Father never planted, mumblers of praises in the night, which God heard not, creatures of the pope's making."

"Another sort," like Cranmer, must needs tune their instruments on another string, "saying that they made the land unprofitable," whilst a third told the people that the king would never want their money again. "This part was well discharged by Cranmer at Paul's cross." So much so "that, although wise men saw there was no truth in it," still they allowed themselves to be influenced by the specious promises.*

* B. Mus. Sloane MS., 2495.

The fact is, that the people were groaning under the weight of an almost insupportable taxation. They were only too ready therefore to listen to any voice promising them immunity in the future—more especially when this was to be purchased by sacrificing the property of others. "After his denial of papal obedience," writes Marillac, the French ambassador, in 1540, "Henry employed preachers and ministers who went about to preach and persuade the people that he could employ the ecclesiastical revenues in hospitals, colleges, and other foundations for the public good, which would be a much better use than that they should support lazy and useless monks."*

Cranmer, at Paul's cross, tried to stifle the natural feelings of dismay and opposition to the proposed suppression, by vague but captivating promises of future exemption from taxation. Nicholas Harpsfield, who was present, says†:—"This prelate (Cranmer) when the king went about to suppress the monasteries, was his chief instrument and worker, and, to bring the people asleep and cause them to have better contentation that (as it was doubted) would not patiently and quietly bear the suppression (as it proved afterwards by the rebellion of Lincoln-

* "Inventaire Analytique," No. 242. Marillac au Connétable, Aug. 6, 1540.

† Nicholas Harpsfield, "The Pretended Divorce," ed. N. Pocock, Camd. Society, 1878, p. 292. The learned editor, in his preface, declares that he considers Harpsfield to be absolutely trustworthy.

shire and Yorkshire) came and preached at Paul's cross, and to sweet the people's ears with pleasant words told them, amongst other things, that they had no cause to be grieved with the evertion of the abbeys, but should rather be glad thereof, for the singular benefit 'that should redound to the whole realm thereby . .' and that the king should, by the suppression of the abbeys, gather such an infinite treasure that from that time he should have no need, nor would not, put the people to any manner of payment or charge for his, or the realm's affairs. This sermon, as no wise man did believe, so myself, that chanced to be there present," have known how false was the promise. "His said sermon was in effect nothing else but a plain invective against all monasteries as places and dens of all error and superstition." "The bishop of Canterbury," writes another of the audience, "saith that the king's grace is at a full point for friars and chauntry priests, that they shall away all that, saving those that can preach. Then one said to the bishop, that they had good trust that they should serve forth their life time, and he said they should serve it out at the cart then, for any other service they should have by that."*

These and such like sermons, setting forth the great advantages to be obtained by the proposed suppression, apparently rendered the nation apathetic to the passing of the act. The golden promises of wealth to all, the banishment of poverty from the

* Wright, p. 38.

land and the suggested freedom from the terrible taxation of Henry, were matters which naturally appealed to the cupidity of the multitudes.* When the "preachers asserted, that no poor man would be found hereafter in England if the monasteries were once broken up and if the lands and farms by which a few monks were then supported were divided among a larger number of holders,"† their logic, for allowing the king to do what he wished, was irresistibly strong. And while all these specious promises were being made to those who crowded to the public sermons, no voice was allowed to be heard on the other side. No one dared to point out how false and illusory was all the promised good.

Even when the bill of spoliation was actually before the commons, the court preachers were still working to direct the current of popular opinion into the channel, the king's wishes had already marked out. On March 12th, which was in that year the second Sunday of Lent and the day after the "great deliberation" had opened in parliament, Latimer, the bishop of Worcester, occupied the pulpit at "Paul's cross. He declared that bishops, abbots, priors, parsons, canons resident, priests and all were strong thieves: Yea, dukes, lords and all. The king, quoth he, made a marvellous good act of parliament that certain men should sow every of them two acres of

* By this time Henry had, it has been computed, already obtained 20 fifteenths from his subjects.

† Sanders' "Schism," Lewis' transl., 1877, p. 157.

hemp, but it were all too little were it so much more, to hang the thieves that be in England. Bishops, abbots, with such other should not have so many servants, nor so many dishes, but to go to their first foundation and keep hospitality, to feed needy people, not jolly fellows with golden chains and velvet gowns, nor let them not once come into the houses of religion for repast. Let them call, knave bishop, knave abbot, knave prior, yet feed none of them all nor their horses, nor their dogs."*

Aided by much rough rhetoric, of which the foregoing is but a specimen, by the threats of the king's vengeance if "his bill" did not pass, and doubtless by the arrogance of Crumwell, who six months before had threatened an English jury unless they convicted the Carthusian fathers, the act was passed through the House of commons. The ground, upon which the members agreed to this first measure of spoliation of religion and the poor, was the royal word alone. *He*, the king, "knew the declaration" he had made to them as to the vicious lives led within the walls of monastery and convent "was true," and his knowledge came from the "reports of his visitors" and other credible sources. Upon this they acted. The commons, servants and creatures of their royal master though they were, perhaps did not know as the present generation do that Henry told the truth only when it suited his purpose. Even

* Wright, p. 36. Thomas Dorset quoted above. This is based on the supposition that the date of the letter is rightly fixed.

their belief in his "declaration," however, would not hold them guiltless as parties to a measure subversive of the elementary rights of property.

Parliament acts for the commonweal. Just as it cannot without injustice take the property of the individual and bestow it without compensation at its caprice, so without sacrilege and robbery it cannot appropriate the wealth, which pious benefactors have bestowed on religion and the poor. More especially is this so, when the property thus taken is not made to serve any public purpose or to mitigate some of the miseries of poverty, but as a sop to the greedy appetite of a vicious and avaricious monarch and his needy favourites. Vice is a ground for reformation, not destruction. "Henry," it has been well said, "was ever prone to reformation when there was anything to gain by it." Here there was more to be gained by destruction. In thus charging the religious houses with being steeped in vice and immorality, the king did them a greater wrong than in the mere robbery of their valuables. In asserting that the reports of his visitors bore him out in this accusation, Henry is but repeating a tale which they were sent by him to tell.

"In every argument advanced in justification of the dissolution of monasteries," writes Amos, "it must be assumed not only that it shows the measure to have been pregnant with good, but that the good preponderated over the evils resulting from the extinction of all the beneficial services rendered to

the community by the monasteries, and from the infraction of the laws of property. Both these evils bore a very different aspect in the reign of Henry VIII. from what they might present in the present day. The destitution of this country in many of the appliances of social life, which has long disappeared, was for centuries remedied or alleviated by monastic institutions in the way of religious duty, or in obedience to the rules of their founders. Again, independently of the spoliation of actual lifeholders, it was, in the age of Henry VIII., to take away one of the chief enjoyments of property and consequently one of the principal incentives to its acquisition, to shake the confidence of proprietors in the security of any provisions they might make out of their possessions for the health, after their deaths, of their souls, whether they consisted of endowments for such superstitious uses as Henry appointed in his own will, or for dispelling ignorance of the mind, or for curing ailments of the body." *

To this quotation may be added an eloquent summary by Sir James Mackintosh, in treating of this act of dissolution, of the uses for which rights of property have been instituted. "Property," he remarks, "which is generally deemed to be the incentive to industry, the guardian of order, the preserver of internal quiet, the channel of friendly intercourse between men and nations, and, in a higher point of view, as affording leisure for the pursuit of

* "Statutes Hen. VIII.," p. 309

knowledge, means for the exercise of generosity, occasions for the returns of gratitude, as being one of the ties that bind succeeding generations, strengthening domestic discipline, and keeping up the affections of kindred; above all, because it is the principle to which all men adapt their plans of life, and on the faith of whose permanency every human action is performed, is an institution of so high and transcendent a nature that every government which does not protect it, nay, that does not rigorously punish its infraction, must be guilty of a violation of the first duties of rulers. The common feelings of human nature have applied to it the epithets of sacred and inviolable." From this consideration the attention of the reader is invited to an examination of the charges which the king "knew to be true from the report of his visitors," and upon which royal knowledge parliament justified the suppression of the Lesser Monastic houses.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "COMPERTA MONASTICA" AND OTHER CHARGES AGAINST THE MONKS.

PARLIAMENT suppressed the lesser monasteries on the faith of the king's "declaration" that vice was prevalent in them. This is certain from the terms of the preamble to the act. It is therein also declared that Henry himself knew "the premisses" to be true, by the "comperts of his late visitation as by sundry credible informations." It becomes therefore necessary to examine into the charges made against the monks by the royal inquisitors, so far as they can be learnt from their letters and reports.

It is hardly necessary to remark, how easy it is to make accusations of this nature and how difficult to disprove them. More especially must this be so, when these charges were made more than three centuries ago, and when many documents, which might have thrown much light on the matter, must have perished. The very report, which is supposed to have recorded the reasons for the ruin of the monastic houses and to have formed the basis of the king's "declaration," has never been heard of since the passing of the act. Still, the assertions,

vituperations and insinuations of subsequent ages have been accepted as the testimony of contemporaries. These moreover have often been collected and embellished by the fertile imaginations of authors hostile to the monastic institute.

Putting aside whatever has been written against the English monks, by those who have endorsed the charges against them without weighing the grounds of the accusation, the reader's attention is invited to the original documentary evidence still remaining. In the first place, there are many letters from the visitors themselves, written whilst engaged on their task of inspection. A selection of these was published by the Camden society from a volume in the Cotton manuscripts in the British museum.* Many others hitherto little known are to be found in the public Record office. Besides these letters there is a document known as the "*Comperta.*"† This

* "The Suppression of the Monasteries," edited by Mr. Wright. The volume is almost entirely taken from the Cotton MS. Cleop., E. iv., which evidently originally formed a part of the "Crumwell correspondence" in the Record Office. The letters in both collections are endorsed in the same handwriting, which is probably that of Mr. R. Starkey, who lived in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the Cotton collection was formed.

† The original in the Record Office is in the handwriting of one of the visitors, John Ap Rice. The two copies in the Museum are evidently taken from this document. There is, however, in the R. O. a fragment of a similar report not transcribed in the Cotton or Lansdowne MSS. It is in all probability a leaf from the abstract of the reports sent by the writer, John Ap Rice, as to the monasteries of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, etc. Since the above was written Vol. x. of the "Calendar of Letters and Papers" has been published, and these documents are entered as No. 364 in that volume.

is merely an abstract of the letters or reports made to Crumwell by his agents. The greater part of the document is taken up with a report on the monasteries in the northern province of York and in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. The rest consists of two portions of a similar account of the diocese of Norwich, written by John Ap Rice. This visitor had joined with Dr. Legh in a request to Crumwell for the suspension of all episcopal powers during the progress of their visitation.* Ap Rice was occupied with Legh in this part of England, after the latter had finished his examination of the University of Cambridge, and before his meeting with Layton at Lichfield in December, 1535, for their northern tour of inspection.

Besides the manuscript "*comperta*," another document of the same nature has been preserved in the pages of "foul-mouthed Bale"† which refers to

* A letter from Ap Rice (Wright, 85) written from Bury St. Edmund's, shows he was engaged in the diocese of Norwich. Also two joint letters (R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xxii., Nos. 12, 16) from him and Legh as to Westderham show that they were engaged in this part of England. The date of the "*comperta*" is important and is dealt with below. Canon Dixon (p. 352) thinks they are a report of a subsequent visitation. Mr. Gairdner (Vol. x., No. 364) refers them to the visit of 1535-6.

† "Pageant of Popes." A portion of this is to be found in the third ed. of Speed's "History," and probably not inserted by him, which was copied from Henri Estienne (called Henry Steven). This author in his "Apologie pour Hérodote" (ed. 1565) says his extract is "tiré d'un livre Anglois." As Bale's book was published in 1555 it is probably the work from which it was copied. The literary history of the extract in Speed (3rd ed.) is interesting, and

some fourteen of the southern monasteries. These "*comperta*," "*comperts*," or accounts were furnished to Crumwell by his visitors whilst on their rounds. For instance, in October, 1535, Ap Rice writes from Cambridge to say that "herewith you have the abridgement of the *compertes* in such places as we have been at since we came from London." In the same communication he goes on to say of Walden abbey:—"Ye may see by the *comperta* of this house how they live, all the sort of them that professeth chastity." This house had a good name, and yet is "as some of the other where we have no comperte." "Here they declared the truth, because their superior always exhorted them so to do; * and in other houses they did not so because of considerations made between them to the contrary, as at St. Albans, where we found little, although there were much to be found."†

A month later the same visitor and Dr. Legh write from Westacre a joint letter, saying they had dispatched Crumwell another "abridgement of the 'comperts' from the last ye had unto Crabhouse."‡

accounts for some strange mistakes. For instance, Bale, probably not knowing the name of the prior of Bermondsey, calls him "*Blank*" (his real name being Richard Gill). Estienne gives the name as "Blanc," and the editor of Speed retranslates him into "*White*."

* Ap Rice had already said that this superior was "teaching in his daily lectures, that there was no virtue *in monachatu*," and was himself a fallen man.

† Calendar, ix., No. 661.

‡ "Evidently," writes Mr. Gairdner (Cal. x., Pref. xlii.), "the third paper in No. 364 of the present volume."

At the same time they regret they cannot send more to him, for "at the greatest houses that we come to commonly they be so confederate, by reason of their heads being mere pharisees, that we can get little or no *comperte* there. And albeit that of the others, ye may soon guess what the rest be, yet if it shall please you hereafter to send a commission to certain houses, *ad melius inquirendum*, and give them that shall go somewhat *more leisure*, we doubt not but ye shall find them all naught."*

Again, on September 27th, 1535, Dr. Legh writes to Crumwell and encloses the "*compertes*" of Chertsey abbey, which is headed "*compendium compertorum apud Chertsey.*"† This document is in precisely the same form and under the same heading as the other *comperta*, and leaves no doubt whatever that the documents are the actual reports forwarded to the visitor general by his instruments, during the progress of their work.

That the chief motive of the visitation and the special desire of the visitors was to discover evil, the letters themselves do not allow us to doubt. "We have no reason, indeed," writes Mr. Gairdner, "to think highly of the character of Crumwell's visitors; and the letters of Layton show that he really gloated over the obscenities that he unearthed."‡ From

* Calendar, ix., No. 808. Note the confession of the rapidity of their examination, and the expectation of finding all they wished against the religious.

† *Ibid.*, No. 472.

‡ *Ibid.*, x., Pref. xliii.

Yorkshire, he and his fellow Legh, in a letter quoted above, *"suppose to find much evil disposition"* in the abbot and convent of St. Mary's, York, *"whereof, God willing, I shall certify you in my next letters."* The importance of this communication may be gathered from the conclusion of the letter. Layton, who had already assured Crumwell, "you will never know what I can do till you try me," adds to this letter from York:—"In the meantime ye shall be fast assured of my faithful service in all such your affairs as ye commit to me, and for no corruption or lucre from my loyalty to swerve in doing my prince's commandment for *your discharge* who hath put your trust in me."*

Individual members of the religious houses, who were tired of the restraints of monastic discipline or who were bad at heart, may perhaps have welcomed the chance of release afforded them in this visitation. From such, Layton, Ap Rice and Legh may have learnt some of the stories, which they entered as charges against members of the various religious communities they visited. That there was even a shadow or semblance of investigation into a single one of the accusations, does not appear by any letter or paper in existence. The very rapidity with which the visitors executed their commission, and the eagerness with which, as their letters prove, they welcomed every indication of evil, would seem to render such an examination impossible and undesir-

* Wright, 97.

able. From the monks, as a body, it is most unlikely that the inquisitors derived much knowledge or assistance. It is probable that most of their charges were the result of illnatured gossip, magnified by their own ready imaginations. They found only what they hoped and expected, and in all probability those, whose reputations were at stake, were left in entire ignorance of the whole matter.

"It is not to be supposed," says Mr. Gairdner, "that abbots and convents generally submitted quietly to a new authority, intent on promoting offensive investigations as a pretext for their own destruction. Many of the principal houses, it is clear, would have nothing to say to the visitors; and it is quite possible that the monks in many cases refused even to exculpate themselves before men for whose characters and commission they had very little respect. Considering the rapidity with which the work was done the investigations could hardly have been very judicially conducted."*

It is impossible for anyone acquainted with the ordinary mode of episcopal visitation of monasteries to believe with Mr. Gairdner, that "the royal visitors probably pursued the old methods of inquiry at these visitations, and the only thing that was new was that the result was now reported to the king."† No bishop ever conducted himself towards the religious communities as, upon the showing of their own letters, Crumwell's agents did upon their tour of

* Calendar, x., Pref. xlii. † *Ibid.*, xli.

investigation. The visitation of religious houses was a solemn duty, fully understood by the bishops of England. It was fulfilled much more generally than has hitherto been believed, and even up to the very time of Henry's royal inquiry an examination, as searching as can be imagined, was made at these visits into the state of monastery and convent. The visit was preceded, as a rule, by a formal notice of it and an order for all to attend the examination. On the appointed day the proceedings commenced by a sermon applicable to the circumstances. The religious were urged as a duty to make known anything that was amiss or needed correction. A secret and individual examination of the members of the community followed, and the complaints, or manifestations of the religious, often trivial, were summed up under the head of "*comperta.*" Upon these the bishop or his commissioners passed their judgment in the shape of "*injunctions*" to the superior and his subjects. Complaints made and entered in the *comperta* are often passed over as groundless in the episcopal injunctions. Serious matters needing correction are enforced with scrupulous severity and with every precaution to ensure due amendment.

In records of visitations which include the *comperta*, there is to be found a complete account of all that any person connected with the house could find to complain of or suspect, whether with justice or injustice. The grumbler by nature is there seen to give vent to the whole accumulation of his grievances

without let or hindrance. The suspicious, timorous, scrupulous person, whose solicitude for the souls of his neighbours is even greater than his fear for his own, has his say ; and he, like his yoke-fellow, the out-spoken, self-satisfied man, finds support in unpleasant duty, by a deep sense of the obligations and "secret" of the visitation. Lastly, the monk of generally anxious temperament eases his conscience, by the declaration that in his opinion everything is going to the dogs *(omnia patiuntur ruinam)*. In the injunctions of the visitor, which are often found in the episcopal registers without a record of the previous examination or the collected *comperta*, there may be seen a calm judgment passed upon the state of the religious house with a special view to all that may have been found amiss.

Very different indeed is the tale such visitations tell as to the state of the monasteries, from that in the report of Henry's inquisitors. In the latter, there is merely a summary of all that was alleged against the moral character of individual religious. There is no indication in the reports of any inquiry, worthy of the name of an examination. Unlike the episcopal visitations there is no judgment such as the "injunctions" afford. The *comperta*, the accusations, and nothing else are given. There is moreover not the slightest indication by whom or under what circumstances the accusations were made.

The bishops did not hesitate to correct sternly and uncompromisingly serious faults against good morals. This is clear by instances which appear in their

registered acts. One example, taken from the registers of York during the episcopate of archbishop Lee may be given. On September 10th, 1535, only three months before Crumwell's agents came on their rounds, the archbishop visited a convent in his diocese and found that one of the nuns had been guilty of grave immorality. "We, therefore," he says in his injunctions, "willing to reform the same horrible crime, command and enjoin the prioress in virtue of obedience that she incontinent after the receipt hereof cause the same dame Joan to remain in prison, or in some secret chamber within the dorter, and that she suffer that no sister nor secular person speak with her without license of the prioress, and that she cause the same dame Joan to keep abstinence every week as followeth, that is to say, every Wednesday and Friday to eat and drink only bread and ale, and abstain from all flesh, fish, butter, eggs, cheese, and milk, and other days to eat as the convent fareth, and that the prioress cause her to have every Friday such discipline in the chapterhouse, in the presence of all the sisters, as is accustomed to be had and done for like offences according to their rule, and we enjoin the prioress that she cause the same dame Joan so to remain in prison and keep the diet aforesaid the space of two years, unless we release the same penance." *

* Reg. Ed. Lee. Archiep. Ebor., f. 99. The account given above of the episcopal visitations may be verified in the registers of Bishop Nicke of Norwich (Bib. Bod. Tanner MSS., Nos. 132, 210).

Returning to the consideration of the *comperta* document it is necessary to remember how this differs from the summary under the same heading to be found in the episcopal visitations. In the latter are contained not only charges against good morals, but various suggestions as to the better ordering, temporal and spiritual, of the religious house. In other words the *comperta* of an ordinary visitation are an abstract of suggestions and complaints made by the religious during the progress of the visit. The *comperta,* composed by Layton and Legh, have reference exclusively to charges against good morals. This would be proof, were other evidence than their letters needed, that the aim and scope of the inquisition was to incriminate the religious and find a pretext to justify the spoliation of their goods and the suppression of the monastic mode of life.

The date of the document, known as the *comperta*, is of considerable importance. Parliament passed the act of suppression on the faith of the king's "declaration" that the monks were immoral. This he knew to be the case by the *compertes* of his late visitations. Are the *compertes* extant those upon which Henry based his declaration? There is no reasonable doubt that these are the documents which were at this time forwarded to Crumwell, for Henry to use in pushing his measure of suppres-

Those contained in the ordinary registers are not, as a rule, entered so fully as in these two volumes, which are devoted to the visitations of the religious houses in Norfolk and Suffolk, A.D. 1514 to 1534.

sion through the parliament. They are, moreover, in the same form as they were originally dispatched by the inquisitors as they progressed with their mission. This may be judged from the *compertes* of the great abbey of Chertsey, which document was written in 1535 during the royal visitation.* The larger *comperta* of Layton and Legh are the result of the northern tour of these two worthies, and agree with their letters written during this same visitation. The document commences with Lichfield, where it is certain they met on December 22nd, 1535.† It includes reports of the cathedral church of York, St. Mary's abbey and Fountains, where they were in 1536, on January 11th, the 13th, and before the 20th respectively.‡ The last letter, moreover, which describes their visitation of Fountains, corresponds with the *compertes* of this abbey. In it, they speak of having got the abbot to "resign privately into our hands, no man thereof yet knowing. We have accepted and admitted his resignation *et declaravimus monasterium jam esse vacans*" and "suffered him to minister to all things (for the avoidance of suspicion) even as he did before, till we know your further pleasure. There is never a monk in that house meet for that room. .

* Calendar, ix., No. 472. This document was sent with a letter to "The Right Hon. Mr. Thos. Crumwell, Chief Sect. to the King's Highness." It is, like the letter, in the handwriting of John Ap Rice, and is in form similar to the other *comperta* which Ap Rice copied from the originals.

† Wright, 91. Letter of Layton to Crumwell.

‡ Wright, pp. 95, 97, 100.

There is a monk of the house called Marmaduke, to whom Mr. Timmes left a prebend in Ripon church, now abiding in the same prebend, the wisest monk in England of that coat and well learned, twenty years officer and ruler of all that house, a wealthy fellow *who will give you six hundred marks to make him abbot*, and pay you immediately after the election without delay or respite at one payment, and, as I suppose, without much borrowing. The first fruits to the king is a thousand pounds, which he, with his policy, will pay within three years and owe no man one groat as he saith, and his reason therein is very apparent. . This monk of Ripon hath a prebend of £40, which you may bestow also upon your friend if you make him abbot." In the *comperta* for the monastery William Thirsk is called late abbot (*nuper abbas*).

After reading the above letter and learning how Thomas Crumwell would be benefited by creating "Marmaduke" abbot, it need not be a matter of surprise, to find that Marmaduke Bradley was appointed to the post. He wrote to thank his promoter on March 6th, 1536.* This fixes the date of the "compendium compertorum" of Layton's northern visitation beyond dispute.

The other manuscript *comperta* also, certainly relate to the same period, previous to the meeting of parliament in the spring of 1536.† The portion of the same document preserved by Bale undoubtedly

* Calendar, x., No. 424.

† The *compertes* for the abbey of Bury St. Edmund are founded

refers to the inquisitions of Layton at the monasteries of Kent and Sussex during the summer of 1535.* We may consequently conclude that all the documents of this nature were intended to serve, and did actually serve, as the basis of the king's "declaration" to parliament in 1536. They are the *compertes* of his "late visitation."

The singular want of honesty in this assurance to parliament is apparent. Henry professed to go by the evidence of his visitors. Their *comperta* included the greater monasteries with the less in wholesale condemnation. The preamble of the act, passed on the strength of the royal assurance, however, declares that in the larger monasteries "thanks be to God religion is right well kept and observed." The fact that the greater monasteries are not spared in these reports, makes it impossible to believe that they were submitted to the inspection of parliament. Even against the high authority of Mr. Gairdner it may be doubted, whether "the substance at least of what was contained in them was read aloud in justification of the intended measure"† of confiscation. If the

entirely on Ap Rice's letter of November 11, 1535 (Wright, 85), and are almost certainly in his handwriting. Legh and Ap Rice can be also traced at work in the diocese of Norwich by other letters, *e.g.*, Wright, 82, 83; R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., Nos. 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, &c.

* See letters, Wright, 58, 75. R. O. Crum. Corr., xx., Nos. 10, 13, 18, 19, 20, &c.

† Calendar, x. Mr. Gairdner (Preface, xlv.) thinks that the *comperta* were read to Parliament, although in the following page (note) he states that "the idea that the small monasteries rather than the large were particular abodes of vice is not borne out by the *comperta*."

celebrated "Black book" ever existed (of which we have no proof beyond the assertion of later authors) it could only have been based upon the *comperta* reports. Such a document must have been drawn up by Henry or his minister, with the full knowledge that it suppressed the suggestions of their agents against the character of the more powerful religious houses. The motive for such a *suppressio veri* is obvious. Wholesale condemnation would have roused too great an opposition to the proposed measure and have defeated its own end. At the same time the *expressio falsi* in the preamble of the act, which (contrary to the *comperta* of Crumwell's agents) declared that "in the great and solemn monasteries of the realm" religion was well conducted, demonstrates the dishonest purpose which actuated the framers of the measure. It is proof positive of the fraud, by which parliament was induced to sanction the appropriation of the corporate property of the lesser monasteries.

It is well here to note in passing that, with very trifling exceptions, no accusations of the same nature are suggested after the bill had been forced through parliament. This fact, when duly considered, seems to show, that such charges of immorality and incontinence were brought against the religious for the distinct object of disarming opposition and securing the passing of the measure. In subsequent letters and reports there is hardly anything that can be construed into a charge of the gross nature, with which

Layton, Legh, and Ap Rice delight to blacken the reputation of monastery and convent during their first tour of inspection.

There is no need to admit that both the letters and reports of the visitors at this period are very damaging to the characters of the monastic houses. Still, even accepting their estimate, the proportion of the well conducted, or, at least, of those against whom no charge is suggested, is very much in excess of what is generally believed. "There were many monasteries named in these reports," writes Mr. Gairdner, "against which nothing is said; and there were more in the dioceses reported on which are not named at all. So that it may be presumed, in the opinion of the visitors themselves, not a few of the monastic houses were pure and well governed."* So far, therefore, from two-thirds of the religious being represented as hopelessly sunk in vice and immorality, even the visitors' *ex parte* reports really charge only a very small minority with vice of any kind.

The form of the *comperta* is the same in each case. The name of the house is followed by a list of members charged with the immorality, arranged under the

* Calendar, x., Pref. xlv. Of the 155 monasteries given in the *comperta* (No. 364), there are 43 against which nothing worse is alleged than the possession of certain relics, which is supposed to argue "superstition." "To judge," says Mr. Gairdner (note) "by the proportion in Yorkshire, the visitors examined only about *four out of ten houses*."

head of private and personal vice,* or under that of incontinence. Then are given the names of such as desire to quit the religious life—a very small number indeed, even taking the numbers of the king's agents as correct.† Lastly, as a rule, the income of the house and the name of the founder is stated. In many instances, amounting to nearly one-third of the whole number, all that the house is charged with, is having an income or being in possession of relics. Upon this latter fact, is founded the vague charge of "superstition." No list of the monks in each house is given, and hence, on the face of the document, no means are afforded of determining the proportion which the supposed guilty bear to the whole body. There is no evidence whatever furnished to support the charge made. And many persons are involved in one accusation or linked together with one defamatory epithet.

In many instances, moreover, a considerable number of charges are laid against many members of a monastery. If anything approaching an inquiry were made into these cases, weeks must have been occupied in the investigation. Hence, as Mr. Gairdner says, "they (the inquiries) could not have been

* Mr. Gairdner, x., Pref. xliii., says, "In some cases even the terms of the accusation may be more or less deceptive" (note). "The term 'incest,' for instance, was applied to the crime of having sexual intercourse with a nun; and 'sodomy,' in very many, doubtless in most cases, signified self-abuse."

† In the whole of the "Compendium Compertorum" of Legh and Layton for the province of York, &c., there are only 50 men and two women represented as willing to abandon the religious life.

very judicially conducted." The visitors' own letters show how they hurried from house to house, and had many other things to search out and inquire into besides the morals of monks and nuns. It is reasonably certain, therefore, that the lists contained in the *comperta* are founded merely upon vague rumours, helped out by the prurient imaginations of Layton and Legh. "As to the monks," writes the highest authority on the state papers of this time, "we can well believe that reports first originated in some cases from the malice of neighbouring proprietors, between whom and them, as monastic chronicles show, there were apt to be frequent disputes. Thus Edward Bestney writes to Crumwell about a 'little religious house named Bygyn in the town of Fordham,' with only two inmates, a prior and a canon, one of whom was old and like to die. Crumwell, it seems, had encouraged Bestney 'to spy out,' he does not say what, but apparently anything that might be for his own advantage; and he accordingly insinuates that the house was likely to fall into the king's hands for the 'enormities' of its two inmates, and adds that the house and lands both lay so conveniently adjoining to his own lands that he should very much like to have the farm. Was it after a full and judicial inquiry that the visitors found some minor form of impurity established against both the dwellers in this house, one of them by report being an old man on the verge of the grave?"*

* Calendar, x., Preface xliii. For the facts see Vol. ix., No. 761, and Vol x., No. 144.

In several instances besides the one given above, it is quite clear from the *comperta* itself, that mere idle rumour must have been the foundation of the charge. Malicious reports, also, fostered if not suggested by the visitors, ever anxious to further Crumwell's intentions, were the sole basis of grave accusations. This is seen more clearly in the *comperta* of Legh and Ap Rice than in those of Layton and Legh. Ap Rice, for example, writes to Crumwell with regard to the visitation of Bury St. Edmund, which in conjunction with Legh he made in November, 1535.

"Please it your mastership, forasmuch as I suppose you will have suit made unto you touching Bury, ere we return, I thought convenient to advertise you of our proceedings there and also of the *compertes* of the same."* He then proceeds to say, that they could find nothing against the abbot's character, except that he was much at his country house, was fond of dice and cards and did not preach. "Also he seemeth to be addict to the maintaining of such superstitious ceremonies, as hath been used heretofore." As "touching the convent, we could get little or no reports among them, although we did use much diligence in our examinations, with some other arguments gathered of their examinations." And they, therefore, conclude "that they had confederated and compacted before our coming that they should disclose nothing."

* Wright, 85.

"And yet it is confessed and proved that there was here, such frequence of women coming and resorting to this monastery as to no place more. . Here depart of them that be under age upon eight, and of them that be above age upon five would depart if they might, and they be of the best sort in the house and of best learning and judgment. The whole number of the convent before we came was 60 saving one and besides, three that were at Oxford."

The *compertes*, which these visitors sent their master after acknowledging that they could "get little or no *reports,* although using much diligence in their examinations," fortunately exist. They are in the handwriting of Ap Rice himself. The abbot is charged with being fond of cards and dice and not doing his duty in preaching. It is added, that he delights in frequenting the houses of women, &c.* Ap Rice confessed in the very letter, with which these *compertes,* written in his own hand, were sent, that there was nothing but vague report against Abbot Melford's character. After this, it is not surprising that nine of his religious are bracketed together, as "defamed of incontinence from too great intercourse with women," and three others "are reported" (fatentur) guilty of other faults. Finally, the *comperta* adds: "There is a grave suspicion that the abbot and convent had agreed together not to tell anything against themselves, for though

* "Gaudet mulierum contubernio."

report says the monks here live licentiously, still there never was less confessed to."*

From this instance, and others that could be given, it must be allowed that the *compertes* are merely a collection of reports, tales or malicious informations. They cannot seriously be considered as any evidence of the moral state of the monastic houses. It is a curious revelation of the bias of Crumwell's agents that they suspect, all monks against whom they could learn no ill, of having agreed together to conceal everything.† This determination to see nothing but evil should surely throw discredit on the *ex parte* reports contained in the *comperta* documents. The same spirit is evinced in the letters the visitors addressed to Crumwell at various stages in their progress and which were doubtless sent with their reports or *comperta*, which we no longer possess. Layton, for instance, on his way to meet Legh at Lichfield visits a Gilbertine convent at Chiksand, in Bedfordshire.‡ Here "they would not in any wise have admitted me as visitor," he writes, "but I would not be so answered, and visited them." From none of the sisters was he able to find out anything amiss, but on the report of "one old beldame" he accused two of the eighteen

* Calendar, x., No. 364,

† *Ibid.*, *e.g.*, *Thetford:* "Etiam hic colligitur suspicio confederationis quum essent 17 numero." *Ikelesworth:* "Et illic subolet etiam suspicio vehemens confederationis nam quum esset 18 numero, nihil tamen confessum."

‡ Wright, 91.

nuns of incontinence. In the same letter, Leicester abbey is declared to be "confederate and nothing will confess." "The abbot," Layton says, "is an honest man, and doeth very well, but he hath here the most obstinate and factious canons that ever I knew." "This morning," he continues, "I will object against divers of them the 'grossest of crime,' *et sic specialiter descendere,* which I have learned of others (but none of them). What I shall find I cannot tell." "If this method were put in practice generally," says Mr. Gairdner, "how much would have been taken for confession? Perhaps silence in some cases."* Certainly it would only have been reasonable to expect, that Doctor Layton would have taken some time to inquire into the particular charges of so grave a nature against the character of the Austin canons, who strenuously denied them. He expressly states, however, in the letter, that he was starting the same morning for Lichfield.†

By such methods of procedure, it is no wonder that the royal agents succeeded in doing Henry's will and sending in a bad report where others failed. Thus by the king's direction, bishop Gardiner along with Fitzwilliam visited Chertsey abbey shortly before the general visitation. They found nothing

* Calendar, x., Pref. xliv.

† Wright, 93: "This morning we depart towards Lichfield church," &c., "and from thence," &c. For other examples of the rapidity of the visitors' progress, see Wright, 72, and Layton's letters as to Sussex, Somerset, &c., in R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xx.

wrong. Legh and Ap Rice, however, succeeded in manufacturing *comperta* for that establishment as foul as what they suggest for many another monastery. The way in which the visitors blacken the good name of convents by ugly epithets in their letters to their master, can be seen in one from Legh and Ap Rice, whilst on their tour in the Eastern counties. Crabhouse is called "a lewd nunery," because the nuns have sold some lands to a Mr. Conisby. And yet this same convent, a year later, is declared to be in a good state, and the nuns "all of good fame and conversation."*

In the *comperta* of the visitors, attention also should be paid to the nature of the charges brought. The greater number are accused of secret and personal sins, which could hardly have been the subject of inquiry. Such must either have been the creation of the visitors' imagination, the result of malicious tale-bearing or the record of the self-accusations of the religious themselves. A wide opinion has prevailed in the past, that confessions of conscience-stricken monks and nuns exist in abundance. Upon these, it has been thought, the chief part of the commissioners' reports are based. This notion is altogether false. As far as can be ascertained, no such confessions or self-accusations are in existence.† It is

* R. O. Exchequer Q. R. Miscell. Suppression Papers, $\frac{8\,3\,9}{1\,3}$

† Wright, in his preface to the Camden Society Volume, p. vi., says, "I think that even the various lists of the *confessions* of the monks and nuns of the several religious houses, entitled *comperta*, and preserved in manuscript, ought to be made public." To call

true that the king declared to the Lincolnshire rebels that "there be no houses suppressed where God was well served, but where vice, mischief, and abomination of living was used, and that doth well appear by their *own confession, subscribed with their own hands*, in the time of their visitations."* There is also the account written in Elizabeth's reign, which refers to the supposed "confessions." "Let the horrible history of their dark, dreadful, and most devilish doings," it says, "which were notified to king Henry VIII., and after to the parliament house by the report of the visitors returning from their visitations of abbeys, and the monks and nuns themselves in their own confessions, subscribed with their own hands, be a proof thereof; which being registered in a black book might more justly be called Doomsday." These last statements, however, were probably made upon the strength of the king's declaration. There is absolutely no record of any such self-accusations subscribed by the names of the offenders. Moreover, the letters of the visitors and their *compertes* prove incontestably, that they did not base the charges they so freely made upon any such confessions.

The king's declaration goes for nothing. Henry, as has been well said, told the truth when it suited his purpose. If he really possessed these confes-

the *comperta* by the name of *confessions* is to convey an entirely false and misleading idea to the readers of Mr. Wright's preface.

* Hall, "Union," &c. (written 1542), f. 229.

sions, which must have been large and bulky documents, why were they not widely published? Why is it that no one has ever set eyes upon them but himself? How could they have so completely disappeared? There are, it is true, one or two so-called "confessions." But these belong to a subsequent period, and were made when the religious were being compelled to surrender their houses into the king's hands. Even these, contain only general and vague self-accusations of "voluptuous living." They were evidently drawn up, not by the religious but by the royal commissioners, who also appear not to have hesitated to sign the document with the names of the monks.* Of these so-called confessions, the best known is that of the monks of St. Andrew's, Northampton.† On the face of it, this lengthy document was composed, not by the conscience-stricken monks, but by those who came to turn them out of their home and take possession of their property. When compared with another similar document from Westacre, it would seem to be merely one of a general type made use of by the commissioners. In fact, the king's officer acknowledges this. "Although, my good

* *e.g.*, the document relating to Westacre (8th Rept. Dep. Keeper, App. ii., p. 48) is of the same general form as that for St. Andrew's, Northampton.

† First printed by Weaver, pp. 106-110. It is a most verbose document, made in the presence of Legh and Layton. Fuller, "Church Hist.," ed. 1845, p. 398, gives the choice passages. It has been well dealt with by Canon Dixon.

lord," he writes, "there wanted here (Northampton) some part of the occasions comprehended in the submission of the late monastery of Westacre . . . yet found we here . . . sufficient enough for the fulfilling of the submission, that now we send your lordship in the place of the other that wanted, so as by the variety of occasions this *book* in the more part or all is altered from the other in matter, as by the perusing thereof your lordship shall well perceive, which I humbly beseech you, that it may like you to do. And although it shall seem tedious, or the overreading unworthy, yet it is the best I could do, and I had the good will to have made the better" if I could. . "Sir, these poor men have not spared to confess the truth, as you shall well perceive, whereby, in my poor mind, they deserve the more favour, and I daresay in their hearts think themselves rather to have merited pardon by their ignorance, than praise or laud for their form of living." He then concludes by saying:—"Sir, we have *practised* with the poor men for their pensions as easily to the king's charges and as much to his grace's honour as we could devise." He adds a hope that his father's request for the lands of the monastery of Mallyng may be favourably entertained.* Another letter, about the same matter, was written by Layton and the other commissioners to Crumwell. "The humble submission of the prior and convent,"

* Wright, 71, dated March 3. The surrender was signed on March 2nd, 1538 (Dep. Keeper Rep. 8, No. 172).

it says, "will be we suppose to the king's honour and contentation, referring our doing and diligence therein to your judgment." It is well here to note, that in 1535 Layton had written from Northampton, where he was on his visitation:—"the prior now is a bachelor of divinity, a great husbond and a good clerk, and pity it is that ever he came there. If he were promoted to a better thing, and the king's grace would take it into his hands, so might he recover all the lands again which the prior shall never. In my return out of the North, I will attempt him so to do if it be your pleasure." Apparently the attempt was not made till later, when the so-called confession* was extracted from him and his community. What was thought of its real purport may be judged from the fact that pensions were arranged for all the religious. The prior, after having been pensioned,† was made first dean of the newly-created see of Peterborough. The history of this so-called "confession," in reality the concoction of Crumwell's agents, will speak for itself. It has often been quoted as one of the most damning pieces of evidence against the monastic institutions,

* The "confession" may be seen in the R. O. State Papers (29 H. VIII.), Box V-50. It is dated March 1. We may note, however, that this is only a copy made apparently in the early part of the 17th century. The body and signatures are in the same hand-writing. It may be added that the real surrender, as it appears enrolled on the Close Roll (Rot. Claus. 29 H. VIII., pars 2, m. 7), is a totally different document; being a surrender in the general form.

† R. O. Aug. Off. Misc. Bks., 232, f. 17.

and its reproduction has generally been accompanied with the insinuation that there are more of the same kind. As far, however, as is known at present this and its prototype of Westacre, composed and adapted to altered circumstances by the ingenuity of the same royal commissioners, are the only documents of the kind.

The *comperta* documents, therefore, cannot be considered as representing "confessions" of vicious life on the part of the monks. They are in reality only the biassed and, probably in many instances, baseless judgments of men who came to report evil. By far the larger number of charges contained in the "reports" are, as has been said, of secret and personal vice, which could not have been easily matter of examination. The other accusations, in the *comperta* and letters of the king's visitors, refer some few to drunkenness, one or two to supposed theft, an insignificant number to unnatural crime and the remainder to incontinence. Under this latter head, the total number of religious charged in all the known letters or reports bears a very small proportion to the entire body of religious at that time in England. In the *comperta* and letters, which report as to the monasteries of a considerable portion of England, scarcely 250 monks and nuns are named as guilty of incontinence.* In the same districts the religious must have numbered many

* This number includes those named in the various MSS. *comperta*, Bale's printed portion, and the letters of the visitors.

thousands. Of these 250, more than a third part can be identified as having subsequently received pensions upon the dissolution of their houses, a fact which even Burnet would consider as disproving the charge in their regard.* Of the entire number of convents of women visited and reported upon by Layton and Legh in the North, they are able to relate very little amiss. Only some twenty-seven nuns in all are charged with vice, and of these, seventeen are known to have been afterwards pensioned. Further, in their whole visitation, extending over thirteen counties, they only report that some fifty men and two women are anxious to abandon the religious life, even under the restrictions imposed by Crumwell's injunctions. This latter fact would seem to show that in truth the monks and nuns were well content with their life and were not so desirous of freeing themselves from their obligations, as is generally believed.

In the case of the nuns charged with incontinence, although the accusation would seem to be clear and unmistakable, it may often be deceptive. "Even here" (in the case of such accusations), says Mr. Gairdner, "we may draw a false inference as to the impurity of convents; for the occurrence may

* The difficulty of identifying the religious at this time is very considerable. They are variously described by their Christian, religious or surnames, and often also by the name of their birth-place. Hence there is no doubt that a great number more really received pensions, but not under the same name as that by which they are entered in the *comperta*.

have taken place before the lady was received into the community. A convent was undoubtedly, in many cases, a convenient refuge for a lady of good family who had disgraced herself—a case which we have reason to know was by no means very uncommon."* It may be acknowledged, that in some cases the charge brought had possibly a foundation in fact. It is more than probable, however, that in others it is altogether misleading. Thus we find in the *comperta,* a serious charge of incontinence laid against one Agnes Butterfield, of Yeddingham convent, in Yorkshire. It is natural to suppose that Agnes Butterfield was a nun; but, if so, it is a strange coincidence that at the time, there was living in the convent a poor widow woman of the same name. The following document shows this: "Mem —That there is one old poor and lame woman in the said house called *Agnes Butterfield*, who hath given to the prioress and convent certain chattels to have a corrody, and she hath no convent seal for the same, but only a promise."† Whether this be the same accused in the *comperta* or not, one of the name afterwards was entered on the pension list of the establishment.

* Mr. Gairdner, x., Pref. xliii.; says, "Thus, when opposite the name of a nun we read the word *peperit*, we cannot reasonably doubt the truth of an accusation which, if false, would have been a very impudent libel." Surely this will depend on those who make the accusation. Neither Layton, Legh, nor Ap Rice would have hesitated at "an impudent libel" if it suited their purposes.

† R. O. Exchequer Q. R. Suppression Papers, $\frac{8}{17}\frac{3}{3}\frac{2}{2}$.

The comparison of the *comperta* documents, also, with previous and even subsequent visitations, tends to throw discredit on the revelations supposed to be contained in them and to show how little they can be relied on as manifesting the moral state of the religious establishments. Thus the monasteries of the diocese of Norwich were visited regularly and constantly by the bishop from 1514 to 1532, and in the acts of these visitations, which usually include the *comperta*, is to be found a record of the state of religious houses in that diocese.* Many of these monasteries and convents are the same, against which, in 1535, Henry's visitors bring charges of a very serious nature. In several instances bishop Nicke, after examination, registers as his judgment "all is well" in 1532, where Legh and Ap Rice, in 1535, find much serious evil. That the bishop was zealous in this duty of visitation, and rigorous in his correction of what he found out of order, is amply proved in his register. Thus, on August 1st, 1532, the bishop sent his commissioners to visit and report upon the priory of Pentney. After examination, and on the testimony of the entire community of 15 monks, the visitors declare that everything is in a good state. Three years afterwards Legh and his fellow lay grave charges against the prior and five of his religious. In the latter case, nothing is forthcoming but the word of two prejudiced and biassed agents of Crumwell; in the former

* Bibl. Bod., Tanner MSS., 132, 210.

we have a record of the opinion of every individual member of the community backed by that of the episcopal delegate. This is but one instance of many that might be adduced, in which the evidence of the episcopal registers distinctly contradicts that of the royal visitors, as to the real state of the monasteries.

The same contradiction is seen in the reports of subsequent royal commissioners. In the spring of 1536, or only a few months after the *comperta* were composed by Crumwell's agents, commissions were issued to re-examine the monasteries, with a view to the suppression of such as were under the annual value of £200. Besides this, the visitors were to report upon "the number of monks, and their lives and conversations." "Returns of the commissioners," writes Mr. Gairdner, "for a certain number of the monasteries in five several counties, are given in this volume, and it is remarkable that in these the characters given to the inmates are almost uniformly good. More remarkable still, in the return for Leicestershire, we find the inmates of Garendon and Gracedieu—two of the houses against which some of the worst *compertes* were found — reported to be of *good and virtuous* conversation. The country gentlemen who sat on the commission somehow came to a very different conclusion from that of Drs. Layton and Legh."* These country gentlemen, be it remarked, were "some of the leading men

* Calendar, x., Pref. xlv.

in each county." How the king appreciated this good report may be understood by the letter of one of the commissioners, George Gyffard, written on 19 June, 1536, from the monastery of Garendon, whilst on this very tour of inspection. "And, sir," he says to Crumwell, "forasmuch as of late my fellows and I did write unto Mr. Chancellor of the Augmentations in favour of the abbey of St. James, and the nunnery of Catesby, in Northamptonshire, which letter he showed unto the king's highness in the favour of those houses, where the king's highness *was displeased,* as he said to my servant, Thomas Harper, saying that it was like that we *had received rewards which caused us to write as we did,* which might put me in fear to write. Notwithstanding, the sure knowledge that I have had always in your indifference, giveth me boldness to write to you in the favour of the house of Walstroppe. The governor thereof is a very good husbond for the house and well beloved of all the inhabitants therunto adjoining, a right honest man, having eight religious persons, being priests of right good conversation and living religiously. having such qualities of virtue, as we have not found the like in any place; for there is not one religious person there but that they can and do use either embroidering, writing books with very fair hand, making their own garments, carving, painting, or graving. The house without any scandal or evil fame, and stands in a waste ground, very solitary, keeping such hospitality that

except by singular good provision it could not be maintained with half as much land more, as they may spend, such a number of the poor inhabitants, nigh thereunto, daily relieved that we have not seen the like, having no more lands than they have. God be even my judge, that I write unto you the truth, and no otherwise to my knowledge, which very pity alone causes me to write."*

It has been pointed out that, besides the charges contained in the *comperta* of the visitors, the letters of Crumwell's agents also contain a variety of accusations against religious persons and houses. Some of these choice stories, reflecting on the character of the monastic establishments, have been told and retold by hostile writers, as typical illustrations of the natural tendency of the religious mode of life. One or two of the best known may now be examined. At the outset we may note that, like the rest of such charges, no evidence is offered in substantiation of their truth. No inquiry was apparently made, and no depositions of witnesses are forthcoming. As a rule, therefore, the stories have to be tested on their own merits, and usually they will be found to depend entirely on the ingenuity of the narrator.

An example very often given, which is supposed to be typical of the depravity prevailing among the monks, is that of the prior of the Crossed friars in London. This religious, "at the dissolution, the watchful emissaries of Crumwell caught *in flagranti*

* Wright, 136.

delicto, and down at once went the king's hammer upon the corrupt little brotherhood."*

This oft-told story is founded on a letter of one, John Bartelot, to Thomas Crumwell.† The writer certainly says that he so caught the prior. In the first place, however, the circumstances are unlikely. The time, when the offence against good morals was said to have been committed, was eleven o'clock in the day on a Friday, in Lent. Then Bartelot himself admits that to keep him quiet the prior gave him £30, and promised him more "by his bill obligatory." This, as Mr. Wright concedes, "is not greatly" to the witness's credit. The prior, however, luckily did not pay and Bartelot summoned him before the lord chancellor. This judge, having heard the case, not only decided against the accuser, "making the premisses to be heinous robbery," but told him he deserved to be hanged. He further ordered him to refund the blackmail which he had already levied upon the unfortunate prior. This is absolutely all the evidence in existence, upon which so-called history has founded its accusation against the character of the prior of the London Crossed friars. As far as the facts speak for themselves, they are decidedly against the accuser. This judgment of the matter is somewhat sustained by the

* "Old and New London," Thornbury, Vol. ii., p. 253. The story is also given in Burnet, ed. Pocock, i., p. 385.

† Wright, 59. The editor says: "His (Bartelot's) transaction with the prior is not greatly to his credit, and the chancellor appears to have formed no very unjust opinion of him."

fact, that the prior of this house "was reported by the visitors of the religious houses to lord Crumwell as a man of inoffensive life."*

Another story constantly repeated, and which has certainly not been allowed to suffer loss by repetition, affects the good name of the Premonstratensian abbey of Langdon in Kent.

This accusation is also connected in some measure with Crumwell's servant, John Bartelot, who was told by chancellor Audley, that for his part in regard to the prior of the Crutched friars "he was worthy to be hanged." Layton, ever "so eloquent in accusations" according to his fellow-commissioner Legh, who knew him so well, tells the story.† Froude declares, without the slightest grounds, that it was "the more ordinary experiences of the commissioners."‡ The letter describes how Layton skilfully caught that "dangerous, desperate, and hardy knave," the abbot of Langdon. The man Bartelot and other servants were left to watch the outer doors of the abbey house while Layton went to the door of the abbot's lodging. Not getting any answer to his knocking "saving the abbot's little dog that, within his door fast locked, bayed and barked," he broke it open with a pole-axe, found

* "Monasticon," vi., p. 1586. Edmund Stretham was the name of the prior who, on April 17, 1534, subscribed to the royal supremacy.

† Wright, 75. Mr. Wright finds the story "singularly ludicrous."

‡ "Hist.," Vol. ii., p. 425.

quite handy. He entered alone, but with his pole-axe, for fear of the abbot. Bartelot, guarding the outlets, caught a woman running away and took her to Layton, who, having examined her, sent her under her captor's charge to Dover. Layton does not say that the abbot was at his lodgings at all, but his letter adds: "I brought holy father abbot to Canterbury, and here at Christchurch I will leave him in prison." A woman's dress was found, at least Layton says so, in the abbot's chest, which fact has been ingeniously rendered by Burnet, to serve his purpose, as: "in the abbot's coffer there was a habit for her, for she went for a young brother."*

Accepting the facts of the letter as they stand, what are they apart from insinuations, pleasantry and dressing up? That a woman was caught running away.† Also, if Layton is worthy of credit, that a female's dress, was found in the "abbot's chest."

* Burnet, i., p. 307. Layton in his letter only says :—"At last I found her apparel in the abbot's coffer." This gloss as to how the woman passed herself off is Burnet's own.

† "But for a conclusion his . . gentlewoman bestirred her stumps towards her starting holes and there Bartlett, watching the pursuit, took the tender damoisel, and after I had examined her, to Dover there to the mayor to set her in some cage or prison for viij days." This is all the information vouchsafed. Layton is very circumstantial on accessories, very sober or reticent on the main point; he does not even say that the woman ran out of the "abbottes logeyng." Neither here nor hereafter does he so much as hint at what the examination elicited. The sequel of the story is told in the text; how far it agrees with the beginning as narrated in Layton's lightest, merriest vein, the reader can judge for himself.

The fact that some of Crumwell's own servants were actually in the house at the time, and yet "marvelled what fellow" it was who thus broke into it looks suspicious. Moreover, both Dr. Layton and Crumwell had a motive in trying to defame the character of the religious, which appears at the close of this very letter. "*Now*," says the zealous visitor, "*it shall appear* to gentlemen of this country, and other the *commons* that ye shall not deprive or visit but upon substantial grounds. Surely I suppose God himself put it in my mind thus suddenly to make a search at the beginning, because no canon appeared in my sight."

In a letter written the same night (October 23, 1535) from Canterbury, Layton, after describing the fire which took place at Christchurch on the night of his arrival, proceeds to speak very ill of Dover, Folkestone, and Langdon. Although he gives the worst possible character to the abbot of the last-named monastery, nothing is said of the story of his capture, which he had reported shortly before. In place of this, another accusation is substituted against William Dare, the abbot, who is called "the drunkenest knave living." The whole community are, in fact, included in one of Layton's sweeping charges of immorality. It is strange that there is not the least reference, even jocose, to the doctor's achievement the day previous, about which he had been so proud. Was it that, on reflection, he saw after all he had found out absolutely nothing upon

which to found an accusation against the abbot? Did he hence desire to substitute another and a more hearsay charge against his character? At any rate his motive was the same, for he expressly warns his master to be "quick in taking the fruits" of the doomed abbey.*

A fortnight later, November 16, 1535, three commissioners attended at the chapter house of Langdon to receive the surrender. These king's officers, although reporting badly of the abbot's administration, bring no graver charges against him. On the contrary, they recommend this man, whom Layton had described as most immoral and "the drunkenest knave living," for a pension.† This reward was granted him by the court of Augmentation for life, or until such time as he received a "fitting ecclesiastical benefice."‡ If Layton's accusations were true the abbot could have been got rid of without expense and without the scandal of proposing to place such a man in cure of souls. This fact, if fairly considered, should suffice to disprove Layton's insinuations and demolish the stock story founded on them.

Further light is thrown on this Langdon episode by the case of the two neighbouring priories of Folkestone and Dover. The same commissioners, who took the surrender of the former, were similarly engaged in the case of the two latter. The superiors of both had

* Calendar, ix., No. 669. † Wright, 89.
‡ R. O. Aug. Off. Misc. Bks., 232, f. 57.

been reviled by Dr. Layton in no measured terms. Of both, these commissioners speak well. To Layton "the prior of Dover and his monks be even as others be, but he the worst of all." He charges them all generally with immorality and incontinence. The "prior of Folkeston also and his monk" are both guilty of unnatural vice, when looked at by the eyes of this prurient man. To the commissioners, both monasteries appear in a very different light. As to the prior of Dover, "for his now case," they write, "divers of the honest inhabitants of Dover show themselves very sorry." In their opinion, also, the prior of Folkestone "is a very honest person and no less beloved among his neighbours." Both these priors are pensioned, like the abbot of Langdon. Whether they ever received what was thus promised is another question. In the case of the prior of Folkestone it appears very doubtful, since two years later he wrote thus to Crumwell:—"Humbly beseecheth your lordship to have in remembrance your poor beadman and daily orator Thomas Barret late prior of Folkestone, who at your request and motion, without further counsel or knowledge of my friends, upon such promises as your lordship made unto me, did meekly resign into the king's hands, and only kept a bed, lacking both blanket and pillow. I am now destitute of my very living, and so like to continue, having little to succour me, nor no friend to trust unto."*

* R. O. State Papers, i. 426.

Another charge against the character of another monk has been often repeated on the authority of the same Dr. Layton. This visitor, who could write the vilest accusations against a religious man and then add "it were too long to declare all things of him that I have heard, which I suppose are true,"* declares that the prior of Maiden Bradley, in Somerset, had six children. Further, that his sons were "tall men waiting on him," and that "the pope, considering his fragility, had given him license in writing *sub plumbo*," to discharge his conscience.† This story, so utterly improbable in itself, rests on no authority whatever, but the *ipse dixit* of the unblushing Layton. It is disposed of by the fact that the prior Richard Jennings was pensioned by the advice of the chancellor and court of Augmentation,‡ and subsequently became rector of Shipton Moyne, in Gloucestershire.

Something may now be said in reference to accusations against the abbot of Wigmore, an abbey eight miles from Ludlow in Herefordshire. Of the long document§ in which the charges are made, Mr. Froude says:—"It is so singular that we print it as it is found—a genuine antique, fished up in perfect preservation out of the wreck of the old world."‖

* Wright, p. 48.

† Wright, p. 58.

‡ R. O. Aug. Office Mis. Bks., 244, No. 143. Original of grants.

§ R. O., State Papers, i., 475.

‖ Short Studies, i., "Dissolution of Monasteries."

The same author has made choice of this story as one of two specimens, which he believes completely justify Henry's measures against the monasteries. He goes into rhapsodies about this "flagrant case," which he declares to be "a choice specimen out of many" of an abbot "able to purchase with jewels stolen from his own convent a faculty to confer holy orders, though there is no evidence that he had been consecrated bishop," and to make £1,000 by selling the exercise of his privilege. The charges are to be found in a letter to Crumwell from one of the canons of Wigmore, named John Lee. The articles are 29 in number, and give the worst possible character to the abbot. He had sold the jewels of the monastery to pay for the fees for his consecration. He took fees for ordination and acted as a bishop, on the strength of the papal bulls. He kept concubines and squandered money upon them. He was very malicious and wrathful, "not regarding what he saith or doth in his fury." He had murdered a man and his wife, who had purchased a corrody from the abbey, and had consented to another murder committed by his chaplain. This chaplain, it is added, is allowed to do what he likes, "to carry cross-bows, and to go fishing and hunting in the king's forests, parks and chases, but little or nothing serving the choir as other brethren do, neither corrected of the said abbot for any trespass he doth commit." Further, the abbot had not kept the injunctions given by Dr. Core from the king, and

would have put the brother who denounced him into prison, had he not been prevented by the chapter. The writer of this strange document "will not name now" many acts of incontinence on the part of the abbot, "least it would offend your good lordship to read or hear the same." In a postscript he adds, "My good lord, there is in the said abbey, a cross of fine gold and precious stones, whereof one diamond was esteemed by Dr. Booth, of Hereford bishop, to be worth a hundred marks." In this is a piece of the true cross, which is used to be brought down to the church with lights and much reverence. "I fear least the abbot upon Sunday next, when he may come to the treasury will take away the said cross and break it and turn it to his use and many other precious jewels that be there." In conclusion John Lee declares that his articles are "true in substance," and that he is ready to prove them. He winds up by the suggestion, that Crumwell should appoint *him*, "or any man that will be indifferent and not corrupt, to sit at the said abbey" as his commissioner.

Much of this long document, and notably the accusation of murder, is absurd on the face of it and may be dismissed. For the rest, as no other evidence is forthcoming it is necessary to fall back upon what is otherwise known of Wigmore and its abbot. The monastery had been regularly visited by the bishops of Hereford before its dissolution, and in the year 1518, the community

placed the nomination of their superior in the hands of cardinal Wolsey. After due consideration, the cardinal made choice of a canon regular of Bristol for the post. This was John Smarte, against whom these grave charges were afterwards brought by his subject, John Lee. At this date, he was declared as publicly known to possess the qualities necessary for a worthy superior.* Smarte was a scholar of Oxford and a bachelor of divinity at that university.† After his election he was much esteemed by the bishop of Hereford, Charles Booth, who wrote to the pope asking that the abbot might be made his suffragan.‡ This request was granted. He became titular bishop of Pavada, and acted as coadjutor of Hereford from 1526 to 1535. During the first six years of this period, he also performed the same office for the diocese of Worcester.§ In this capacity, as suffragan bishop, abbot John Smarte held the usual diocesan ordinations, some of which (notably that in the first year of his office, 1526) were very great. The fact that the bishop of the diocese had asked from Rome this abbot's nomination as his suffragan, disposes of the insinuations which Mr. Froude makes, as to his having purchased a "faculty" to ordain, "though there is no evidence that he had been consecrated bishop."

* Reg. Booth, Ep. Heref., f. 24.

† Reg. Univ. Oxon. Boase, i., p. 53. "Smarte or Smerte, Jol.n, Reg. Can.," B.A. 1508, B.D. 1515.

‡ Reg. Booth, f. 95.

§ Stubbs' "Registrum," p. 147.

The accusations brought against his character by the letter of John Lee are more difficult to meet. His appointment by Wolsey as abbot, and the good opinion certainly formed of him by bishop Booth, are considerable evidence that Lee's charge was malicious and false. Fortunately, however, a visitation of Wigmore was ordered by bishop Edward Fox in the autumn of 1536, and his injunctions were issued on 26th March of the following year.* As these orders follow closely the lines of the charges in Lee's letter, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that this exceptional visitation was ordered, in consequence of the canon's complaints.† Whether this be so or not, we have in the injunctions for Wigmore, entered in the register of bishop Fox, issued in the spring of 1537, an independent judgment about the state of the abbey and the character of its superior. As to the charges of incontinence against him, Dr. Hugh Coren, the vicar general, who held the visitation, appears to have reported mere imprudence on his part. The bishop only enjoins him to avoid being too much with women. That no case had been proved against him, however, appears tolerably certain from the insertion of the clause "if there be any" (*si quæ sint*) into the body of this injunction. He is ordered to let the brethren know "whether he has redeemed the jewels which he has pledged," and

* Reg. Fox, Ep. Heref., f. 21.

† *Ibid.*, f. 8, says the king had directed these visitations by his letters.

to restore them to the monastery. The usual regulations are made for the yearly accounts and for the custody of the monastic deeds. The abbot is warned to correct his subjects with mildness and not too roughly, and the subjects on their part are warned to be obedient in all things to their abbot, and to look upon the virtue of chastity as the gem of the religious life. Finally the abbot's chaplain, Richard Cubley, about whom Lee had complained in his letter, is ordered to attend the choir like the rest of the canons and to desist from hunting and other unmonastic occupations. Thus, after a careful examination, little appears against the character of Wigmore and its abbot, John Smarte. The visitation really discredits the charges and base insinuations of John Lee. If this examination followed upon his complaints to Crumwell, as we have every reason to suppose, then the injunctions must fairly be considered as a verdict in favour of the abbot. In any case, we have in this record a picture of the state of the monastery and a judgment on the character of its superior altogether at variance with that presented in the letter of the discontented canon.

In speaking of the charges against monks in general, reference must be made to a source from which many of the tales of crime and vice have sprung. A certain William Thomas, who was clerk to the privy council in 1549, wrote an account of the reign of Henry VIII. shortly after the accession

of Edward VI. It was called "the Pilgrim,"* and was composed in Italian as a defence of Henry's character against Pietro Aretino. To show how utterly unreliable the whole account is, and yet how it has been the storehouse from which subsequent writers hostile to the monastic institute have freely drawn, what the author says about the destruction of the religious houses may here be given.

"Wherefore I will now dispose me to speak of the monasteries which his majesty suppressed," he says. "The king had found out the falsehood of these jugglers," and by his commissioners "the matter came fully to light; for when they had taken upon them the charge of examination, and began by one and one to examine those friars, monks, and nuns, upon their oaths sworn upon the evangelists, there were discovered, hypocrisies, murders, idolatries, miracles, sodomies, adulteries, fornications, pride, envy, and not seven but more than seven hundred thousand deadly sins. Note well these few words, and I shall tell you: In their dark, sharp prisons, there were found dead, so many of their brethren that it was a wonder, some crucified with more torments than ever were heard of, and some famished to death only for breaking of their superstitious silence, or some like trifle: and specially in some

* In MS. B. Mus. Cott. MS., Vesp. D. 18, and printed in 1774. Mr. Froude published the book again with notes in 1861. Thomas took part in Wyatt's conspiracy, and was executed at Tyburn, May, 1554.

children there was used a cruelty not to be spoken of with human tongue. There was of the hermits some one that under the colour of confession had used carnally with more than two or three hundred gentlewomen and women of reputation, whose names enrolled by commandment they showed unto the commissioners, insomuch that some of the self-same commissioners found of their own wives titled among the rest.*

"In conclusion, upon the return of these commissioners, when the king was fully informed of the case, incontinently he called his parliament. But or ever the counsellors of the same could assemble together, here came that abbot and that prior, now came that abbess, and there came that friar, from all parts of the realm, unto the king, offering their monasteries into his hands."†

This account is obviously at variance with known facts. The charges suggested are quite unsupported by any evidence which exists. And it is quite certain that Henry's visitors would have been only too glad to avail themselves of the harrowing details given by Thomas, had there been the slightest foundation for them.

In concluding this brief examination of the grave accusations made against the monasteries, it may be useful to point out how strong is, what may be called, the *negative* evidence in favour of the general

* Mr. Froude's edition, p. 71, &c.

† *Ibid.*, p. 74.

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moral tone of these establishments, as against the biassed accounts of Henry's royal commissioners. The historian Strype says, that special injunctions were sent to the bishops by Crumwell to watch narrowly into the conduct of "the abbeys and religious houses that especially stuck to the pope and kept as much as they could to the old superstitions."* In spite, however, of these special instructions, although we have numerous letters † from the bishops of the time, there is hardly an expression that can be construed into a condemnation of the moral lives of the monks. This negative testimony is all the more important, as many of these ecclesiastics were known opponents of this method of life. The old and contemporary chroniclers — Hall, Stow, Grafton, Holinshed and Fabian—are also singularly silent as to the pretended vicious lives practised in the cloisters of England. And Wriothesley, although clearly in favour of the cause of the reformers, makes no mention whatever of these charges in his chronicle. He says that in 1535 the lesser monasteries were granted to the king, "to the augmentation of the crown," and adds: "It was pity the great lamentation that the poor people made for them, for there was great hospitality kept amongst them, and, as it was reported, ten thousand persons had lost their living

* "Ecc. Mems.," i., 1, p. 333 (ed. 1822).

† An immense number of letters are in existence from Cranmer, Stokesley, Latimer, Rowland Lee, and others.

by the putting down of them, which was great pity."*

Lord Herbert declares that bishop Latimer was anxious to preserve some of the monasteries—at least two or three in each diocese. In bishop Latimer's arguments with king Henry VIII. against purgatory, he concludes thus:—"The founding of monasteries argued purgatory to be, so the putting them down argueth it not to be. What uncharitableness and cruelty seemeth it to be to destroy monasteries if purgatory be? Now, it seemeth not convenient the act to preach one thing, and the pulpit another clear contrary." † This reference must have been to the act for the suppression of lesser monasteries (1535), because, at the date of the fall of the greater houses, Latimer was not in such circumstances as would allow him to controvert with Henry.

Cranmer also, who with others narrowly watched the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury, admitted

* Camd. Soc., ed. Hamilton. This is a contemporary London chronicle, and its negative evidence is very valuable. Had there been much talk about the immoral lives of the monks it is reasonable to suppose the author would have made some note of it. He had every means of knowing, as he had an official position among the heralds, having become Windsor herald on Christmas day, 1534. He was attached chiefly to the person of chancellor Audley. See editor's remarks, p. 274. It is also very remarkable that no mention of the great outcry against the monasteries is to be found in the letters of the well-informed Chapuys or of other writers at this time.

† Printed in Strype, "Ecc. Mems.," i., p. 388.

that there was nothing whatever against their moral character. Many of these same monks became the first secular canons of the cathedral, although they were amongst those most seriously accused by the visitors. Moreover, Richard, the suffragan of Dover, who was much employed on the work of suppression and has left many letters, particularly as to the friars, makes no charge of so serious a nature, as those brought by Layton, Legh and Ap Rice. This may be accounted for, possibly, because his mission was rather to suppress than to find motives for the work. As he was occupied in this, after parliament had given over the smaller houses to the king, there was no need for furnishing such evidence. It is true that Crumwell, even then, did not approve of the way he spoke of the religious, and charged him with having still "a friar's heart." But, "the favour I have shown," replied the bishop, "hath not been for my friar's heart, but to bring all things with the most quiet to pass; and also till now that your honourable letter came to me I never could perceive anything of *your pleasure,* but ever feared that if I were too quick that I should offend your lordship." And so, to do Crumwell's pleasure, he makes some general accusations against the friars he has visited, and adds this significant postscript: "And my good lord, I beseech you think not that I am any feigner to you, for I assure you I am nought, but am and will be true and as secret to you as any servant that ye have, and as glad to do that thing that should

please God specially and the king's grace and you."*

In fact, there is very little evidence of any kind that the gross insinuations against monks and nuns in general, and the special charges, brought against a certain small proportion, by such men as Layton, Legh and Ap Rice, were made or believed in by others. There is, moreover, most positive evidence, to which subsequent reference will be made, of the esteem and respect in which many religious houses were held by those who had best reason to know their true character. If we add to this the singular silence as to such charges, maintained by contemporary chroniclers, we are led to the conclusion that these terrible accusations were not much insisted upon, even in the parliament, which passed the bill of suppression. More than one authority clearly states that the chief motive, which actuated the servile parliament in passing the measure, was the hope that the property thus appropriated from the church and poor, would be a means of freeing them for some time from the constant and importunate exactions of the king. It was hoped that the people would thus be indirectly benefited. This conclusion is much strengthened by the fact that within a very short time after the first dissolutions it was proposed to present to the king a petition from the lords and commons, asking him to stay any further suppressions. The ground for this request was, that so far

* Wright, 197.

from doing good to the country, as had been represented, the destruction of the religious houses was an unmitigated evil. "And albeit," this remarkable document runs, "most dread sovereign lord, at the making of the said act it was thought that we might full well thereby have advanced the revenues of your noble crown without prejudice or hurt of any your poor subjects, or of the commonwealth of this your realm; *yet nevertheless* they perceive those houses already suppressed showeth plainly unto us, that a great hurt and decay is thereby come and hereafter shall come to this your realm, and great impoverishing of many your poor obedient subjects for lack of hospitality and good householding, which was wont in them to be kept to the great relief of the poor people of all the country adjoining to the said monasteries, besides the maintenance of many servants, husbandmen and labourers that daily were kept, in the said religious houses." Then, after some suggested regulations for the property of monasteries already suppressed, the proposed petition asks that all monasteries, of whatever kind they were beyond the Trent, and which, although falling under the act, had not as yet been suppressed, "shall stand still and abide in their own strength and foundation, and the act aforesaid of suppression of religious houses that were not above the yearly value of £200 lands, to be frustrate as concerning them and of no effect."*

Such a document would be impossible, if the chief

* B. Mus. Cott. MS. Cleop., E. iv., f. 215 (182).

cause of the suppression had been, as is supposed, the hopeless state of immorality in which the monasteries were sunk. The truth is, that money was the object, which Henry and his minister had in view. This is emphasized by the fact that many monasteries were allowed to purchase temporary continuance by heavy payments to the royal exchequer. As for the charges brought by Layton and his fellows, they are unsupported by any other evidence but their bare assertions. They are worth so much and no more.

CHAPTER X.

THOMAS CRUMWELL, THE KING'S VICAR GENERAL.

FIRST and chief among the accusers of the monks must be reckoned Thomas Crumwell. His was the mind, which first conceived the idea of attacking the papal power in its strongholds and procuring thereby the wealth to gratify the covetousness of the king. Perhaps no actor on the stage of history has ever possessed greater powers, personal and political. Certainly, no single minister in England ever exercised such extensive authority, none ever rose so rapidly, and no one has left behind him a name covered with greater infamy and disgrace.

Thomas Crumwell, so far as his early history is known, was born of parents in poor circumstances. His father is said to have been a blacksmith at Putney, and Thomas in his youth seems to have been apprenticed to a fuller named Wix.* He was not contented, however, to remain long in this humble state. As the gossip in the day of his power went, he had in youth been thrown into

* B. Mus., Sloane MS., 2495, f. 8.

prison for some offence, and had been subsequently obliged to leave the country.* At an early period, we find him, or someone of his name, in the service of the Marchioness of Dorset, and all accounts agree in saying, that he passed a portion of his youth as a common soldier in Italy. He once told Cranmer that he had been at one time a "ruffian," and some authorities seem to think it not improbable that he was present when Rome was assaulted and taken in May, 1527, by the imperial army, under the Duke of Bourbon. Among those who took part in the sack of the city there is said to have been † "an Englishman of low, vicious habits and infidel principles, who afterwards became of terrific importance to the church of England." This is thought by some to have been Thomas Crumwell.‡

From his own letters he appears to have been settled as a merchant at Middelborough in 1512,

* Calendar, ix., No. 862. Chapuys to Granvelle, London, Nov. 21, 1535 (printed in Mr. Froude's ed. of "Thomas' Pilgrim," p. 106). "Sir Master Crumwell, of whose origin and antecedents your secretary, Antoine, tells me you desire to be informed, is the son of a poor blacksmith, who lived in a small village four miles from this place, and is buried in a common grave in the parish churchyard. His uncle whom he has enriched was cook to the late archbishop of Canterbury (Warham). The said Crumwell in his youth was an ill-conditioned scapegrace. For some offence he was thrown into prison, and was obliged afterwards to leave the country."

† Maitland, "The Reformation," p. 228. The author thinks that if Crumwell was present it probably was in the service of Wolsey, and not at this time as a soldier.

‡ Lord Herbert, in Foss' "Judges of England," Vol. v., p. 147.

for in that year he employs a correspondent, in Antwerp, to buy an iron chest of considerable size, in which presumably to keep his money. Before 1520, Crumwell had added the occupation of scrivener to his other avocations and was also engaged in accommodating members of the aristocracy with loans of considerable amount. This money-lending business appears to have always possessed special attractions for him, as he is found lending large sums of money, even when at the very height of his power.* In 1523, Crumwell entered parliament. And though, apparently, he did not take any very prominent part in the debates, it is possible that he was of service to Wolsey in obtaining the parliamentary grant of a very large subsidy voted in that year. In 1525 he was living near Austin Friars, in London, and engaged as a merchant, lawyer and money lender.† Amongst those, who were obliged to have recourse to him in this latter capacity, was lord Henry Percy, then attached to the court of the cardinal of York—a court hardly less magnificent and costly than that of the king himself. By this client Crumwell may well have been introduced to the notice of Wolsey.

A portion of the wealth he possessed at this time is said to have come from the sale of forged indulgences. The story goes, that whilst acting as a merchant at Antwerp he was employed, by two

* R. O. Chapter House Books B½.

† Calendar, iv., Nos. 1385, 1586, 1620, &c.

citizens of Boston, to journey to Rome for the purpose of obtaining from pope Clement VII. the renewal of indulgences attached to the guild of St. Botolph's church in that town. This apparently suggested to him that profit might be made by the sacrilegious sale of these indulgences, which became known as "Boston pardons."* For a time also he seems to have traded as a merchant in Italy,† and whilst in that country to have studied and imbibed the principles of Machiavelli, whose works were then being published at Venice.‡ It was certainly in the school of that Italian writer that he learnt those maxims he afterwards carried out in his dealings with Henry and his subjects.§

Whilst in cardinal Wolsey's service, Crumwell was chiefly employed in the work of suppressing the monasteries, which had been doomed to extinction for the purpose of endowing the cardinal's colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. In this occupation he acquired a knowledge of the monastic houses, and of the methods useful to employ in seizing the pro-

* B. Mus., Sloane MS., 2495, f. 24. Foss' "Judges of England," v., p. 147.

† "Apologia Reg. Poli ad Car. V." (1744), Vol. i., p. 126. "I (Pole) knew a merchant in Venice who did business with him."

‡ "The History" appeared at Venice in 1527. "The Prince" in 1532, and reprinted at Florence 1534.

§ Cardinal Pole says, that when Crumwell was in the service of Wolsey, he strongly recommended the works and principles of Machiavelli, especially those contained in "Il Principe" to him (Pole). Ellis, Letters, 3rd Series, iii., 278.

perty of the monks.* This work may very possibly have suggested to his mind the subsequent wholesale confiscations. It certainly gave him opportunities, of which he was not slow to profit, to promote his own advancement and interests. In these, his earliest public employments, he gained no enviable notoriety. "The agents," says Mr. Brewer, "employed in the suppression were not men who exercised their functions meekly, or even with scrupulous integrity. One of them, Dr. Allen,† a hard, astute man, who like his fellow Crumwell had apparently been trained to business, was afterwards made archbishop of Dublin, where his imperiousness and rapacity brought him to a violent end. Of Crumwell it is enough to say that, even at this early period of his career, his accessibility to bribes and presents in the disposal of monastic leases was notorious."‡ When Wolsey, who was at Amiens, proposed to send Allen on a message to the king, Knight wrote to him: "In case Mr. Allen be not dispatched hitherwards on your message, or may be in time revoked, your grace might use better *any* about you for your message to the king but him. I have heard the king and noblemen speak things

* R. O. Exchequer Q. R. Treasury of Receipt, $\frac{5}{47}$. The sales by T. Crumwell of Begham Priory, Kent, at this time. It might well be taken for an account of a suppression ten years later.

† About this Dr. Allen see the chapter on "Wolsey and the monasteries," p. 89.

‡ "Henry VIII.," ii., p. 368. The suppressions under Wolsey are spoken of.

incredible of the acts of Dr. Allen and Crumwell, a great part whereof it shall be expedient that your grace do know."* Cardinal Pole also declares that these violent suppressions, carried out under cover of authority from the pope, obtained by the masterful influence and diplomacy of Wolsey, proved a fortune to Crumwell. From this time his worldly prospects, as Pole says, were secured. "He (Crumwell) was certainly born," he adds, "with an aptitude for ruin and destruction."†

There is no doubt that in 1529 Crumwell was a very prosperous man. By a will dated in July, a few months before his patron's fall, he makes complicated bequests, which prove that he must have been possessed of considerable property.‡ To each of the five orders of friars within the city of London, for instance, he leaves twenty shillings to pray for his soul. He directs his executors to "engage a priest" who for the three years next after his death is to sing mass for his soul. For this service they are to pay him £20 a year.§ That Henry fully understood the character of the tool he

* Calendar, iv., No. 261 (Aug. 19, 1527). This has been quoted previously in this volume.

† "Apologia," Epist. collectio., Vol. i., p. 127.

‡ See Froude, "Hist.," Vol. ii., ed. 2nd, note to chapter vi. "It proves that Crumwell, although in the service of the cardinal, was in possession of a large private fortune, and at the head of a considerable household."

§ Five or six years after he changed the provisions of this will somewhat, but still enjoined payments for prayer for his soul. In fact, the £20 is increased to £46 12s. 6d.

made use of for his own purposes, is not to be doubted. He is said once to have boxed his minister's ears right soundly,* and "when at cards he had a knave dealt him, he would exclaim 'Ah! I have Crumwell.'" †

On Wolsey's disgrace, Crumwell's first thought was how to save himself from being involved in his master's ruin. He had reason to fear the consequences of acts which, although perpetrated in the cardinal's service and under cover of his authority, had placed him within reach of the law. Now that the strong arm which had shielded him was paralyzed, the popular resentment against him did not fear to make itself heard. In defending his patron in parliament it is possible that he may have been actuated by sincere motives of gratitude, but in defeating the bill of attainder, he was in reality only making the best possible defence for himself. To have allowed the bill to pass, would practically have been to acquiesce in his own ruin. The charges against the cardinal were founded, at least partially, on the grave injustice done in the work of suppressing certain monasteries. And it was on this very work, that Crumwell had been specially employed and had earned for himself unenviable notoriety. His own, as well as his master's, safety consequently demanded the defeat of the attainder. "I have read," says dean Hook, "with attention the letters

* Blunt "Reformat.," i., p. 47.

† B. Mus. Sloane MS., 2495, f. 8.

addressed to Crumwell by Wolsey, and I think that any one who does so will come to the conclusion that Wolsey had no confidence in Crumwell's sincerity; and that Crumwell did not treat his fallen master with consideration and kindness. He was obliged to defend him, for he had no other course to pursue."*

Moreover, the very fact of Crumwell's attitude towards the measure, at a time when no opposition to the king's wishes and intentions would be tolerated, shows that some secret understanding had been arrived at between the monarch and his future adviser.† The account given by Cavendish of the way Crumwell left the cardinal, proves that the former knew he was in great danger, and that he had the intention of trying to escape from the difficulties which beset him, by treating at once with the court. In no other way can the scene described by Cavendish be explained. Thomas Crumwell evidently thought it high time he should look to his own affairs. More especially was this necessary as there seems to have been a report current, which affected him most seriously. When Wolsey's case was settled, the people said, then would come Crumwell's turn for punishment. In fact, the popular

* "Lives of archbishops," vi., p. 128.

† Dr. Pegge says, "The rejection of the bill may be justly ascribed to the relentment of the king, for Crumwell would not have dared to oppose it, nor the commons to reject it, had they not received an intimation that such was the royal will.—Singer's "Cavendish," i., p. 209 note.

voice had already consigned him to the gallows. Cardinal Pole, who was in London at the time, asserts that he himself heard the expression of popular exultation over the expected punishment of one considered so well deserving of death. He declares also, that it was asserted Crumwell had already been arrested and cast into prison.* That he was really in danger appears from the account Cavendish gives of the scene he witnessed in the cardinal's house at Esher, on November 1, 1529.† "It chanced me," he says, "upon All-hallowe day to come into the great chamber at Esher, in the morning, to give mine attendance, where I found Mr. Cromwell leaning in the great window with a primer in his hand, saying our Lady matins, which had been a strange sight in him before.‡ Well, what will you have

* "Apologia Reg. Poli. ad Carolum V. Cæsarem," Epist. Collectio, Brixiæ, 1744, Vol. i., p. 126. "Ipse (Crumwell) omnium voce, qui aliquid de eo intellexerant ad supplicium posceretur. Hoc enim affirmare possum, qui Londini tum adfui et voces audivi, adeo etiam ut per civitatem universam rumor circumferretur, eum in carcerem fuisse detrusum, et propediem productum iri ad supplicium."

† Cavendish's "Life of Wolsey," Ed. Singer, 1825, i., p. 192.

‡ The reading here adopted is that approved of by Dr. Maitland ("Reformation," p. 230). Some authorities have printed "*since*" in place of "*afore.*" Dr. Maitland adds:—"That Crumwell had before that time avowed infidel principles is beyond a doubt. Cardinal Pole asserts that he openly told him he considered that vice and virtue were but names, fit indeed to amuse the leisure of the learned in their colleges, but pernicious to the man who seeks to rise in the courts of princes. The great art of the politician was in his judgment to penetrate through the disguise which sovereigns are accustomed to throw over their real inclinations, and to devise

more? He prayed no more earnestly than he distilled tears as fast from his eyes. Whom I saluted, and bade good-morrow. And with that I perceived his moist cheeks, the which he wiped with his napkin. To whom I said, 'Why, Mr. Cromwell, what meaneth this dole? Is my lord in any danger, that ye do lament for him? or is it for any other loss that ye have sustained by misfortune?'

"'Nay,' quoth he, 'it is for *my* unhappy adventure. For I am like to lose all that I have laboured for, all the days of my life, for doing of my master true and diligent service.' 'Why, sir,' quoth I, 'I trust that you be too wise to do anything by my lord's commandment, otherwise than ye might do, whereof you ought to be in doubt or danger for loss of your goods.' 'Well, well,' quoth he, 'I cannot tell; but this I see before mine eyes, that everything is as it is taken; and this I know well, that I am disdained with all for my master's sake; and yet I am sure there is no cause why they should do so. An evil name once gotten will not lightly be put away. I never had promotion by my lord to the increase of my living. But this much I will say to you, that I will this afternoon, when my lord hath dined, ride to London, and to the court, where I will either make or mar, or ever I come again. I will put myself in prease, to see what they be able to lay to my charge.'

the most specious expedients by which they may gratify their appetites without appearing to outrage morality or religion."—(See Singer's "Cavendish," i., p. 193, note).

"Then," continues Cavendish, "my lord came thither with his chaplain, one Dr. Marshall, and first said mattins, and heard two masses in the time of his mattins saying. And that said, he prepared himself to mass; and so said mass himself. And when he had finished all his service, incontinent, after he was returned into his chamber, he called for his dinner, which was served into his privy chamber. And there dined, among divers his doctors, among whom this master Cromwell dined. And sitting at dinner it came to pass that he fell in communication of his gentlemen and servants, whose true and faithful service my lord much commended. Whereupon Mr. Cromwell took an occasion to tell my lord that he ought in conscience to consider the true and good service that they did him in this his necessity, the which do never forsake him in weale nor in woe."

The cardinal lamented his sad fortunes, which had left him nothing but words of thanks to give his servants. Crumwell thereupon suggested, that the cardinal's chaplains should be made to give up to him some of the income they had from the preferments to which he had presented them, so that he might have something to give his retainers. "Your poor servants," he said, "have taken more pains in one day than all your idle chaplains have done in a year. Therefore if they will not frankly and freely consider your liberality, and depart with you of the same goods gotten in your service, now in your great indigence and necessity, it is a pity that they live,

and all the world will have them in indignation and hatred for their ingratitude to their master."

The scene after dinner, when the cardinal took leave of his servants, may be read in the graphic account of Cavendish. Crumwell, who declared that he had "not received of your grace's gift one penny for the encrease" of his living, gave his master a present of five pounds. He then exclaimed, in the presence of all the household, "And now let us see what your chaplains will do." No judgment need be formed of Crumwell's motives in thus trying to humble the clerical retainers of his master. However, "when my lord returned into his chamber lamenting the departure of his servants, making his moan to master Crumwell, who comforted him as best he could, and desired my lord to give him leave to go to London, where he would either make or mar ere he came again (which was always his common saying)."

It is not easy to understand what means Thomas Crumwell took to defeat the popular clamour for his punishment, and to change the king's views regarding him. Henry no doubt saw in him one who was likely to be a useful instrument in his hands. Something more, however, was needed to alter the king's known contempt and distrust into immediate reliance on his services, and to establish a secret understanding between them. It has appeared probable to some that Crumwell at his interview with Henry suggested, a solution of the king's

difficulties with the pope. It was nothing less than the entire withdrawal of England from spiritual allegiance to the Holy See, and the declaration that the king was henceforth to be considered the head of the Church in England. Others have imagined that he captivated the king by showing him how easily he might lay his hand on the riches of the Church and the broad lands of the monastic bodies. Whatever the motive or the inducement, it seems certain that at this interview Crumwell obtained the king's approval to the defeat of the "bill of attainder" and to the policy of proceeding against the cardinal under the statute of "præmunire." In this way the king would still possess himself of the fallen minister's property. Indeed, by this method Henry would be the gainer. For not only could the cardinal be brought under the law, for acting as legate of the pope, but the entire body of clergy also. In fact, all who had admitted these legatine powers were involved in the meshes of the legal statute and were in danger of forfeiting goods and chattels to the king's majesty.

That Henry had granted his royal license for the cardinal to act as he had done, is unquestioned. The obvious way, therefore, of meeting the charge was by the production of the royal permission under the great seal. When the commissioners came to ask him, what answer he could make to the indictment, Wolsey replied: "The king's highness knoweth right well whether I have offended his majesty and

his laws or no, in using of my prerogative legatine for the which ye have indicted me. Notwithstanding, I have the king's license in my coffers, under his hand and broad seal, for exercising and using the authority thereof in the largest wise within his majesty's dominions, the which remaineth now in the hands of my enemies."* Not having the document, Wolsey threw himself on the king's mercy. By what means did this license under the great seal find its way "into the hands" of the cardinal's enemies? Was it the peace offering of Crumwell to Henry? An early account of the transaction, which clearly took place between the king and the servant of the fallen cardinal, declares that the price paid by Crumwell to secure his own safety and the king's favour, was the theft of this document from the private papers of his master, to which he had access. "And so like an unfaithful and traitorous servant the said Crumwell stole from his master and delivered to the king."†

By this method of acting at any rate, Crumwell served his own purposes. He retained the management of the revenues forfeited to the king under the statute of præmunire. Amongst the cardinal's property was accounted the endowments of the see of Winchester and the revenues of the abbey of St. Albans, together with those of the Ipswich and Oxford colleges. The king had granted pensions

* Singer's "Cavendish," i., p. 209.

† B. Mus. Arundel MS., 152, f. 426.

and annuities out of these estates to several of the nobles. Crumwell in dispensing them, was brought into contact with many of these who came to solicit therein his good offices.* "On which master Cromwell," writes Cavendish, "perceiving an occasion, and time given him, to work for himself, and to bring the thing to pass, which he had long wished," was liberal in his promises to those who asked his help, and having through the management of these estates constant intercourse with the king he soon "enforced the king to repute him a very wise man, and a meet instrument to serve his grace, as it after came to pass."

Crumwell's rise after this was rapid and unchecked as long as he served Henry's purpose. "It more resembled," writes Lord Campbell, "that of a slave at once constituted grand vizier in an Eastern despotism than of a minister of state promoted in a constitutional government where law, usage, and public opinion check the capricious humours of the sovereign."† He became successively master of the king's jewels, chancellor of the Exchequer for life, master of the Rolls, and secretary of state, the king's vicar general in matters ecclesiastical, lord privy seal, dean of Wells, and great chamberlain.‡ In 1533 he

* "Out of the revenues of Winchester and St. Albans the king gave to some one nobleman three hundred marks, and to some a hundred pounds, and to some less, according to the king's royal pleasure." "Cavendish," ed. Singer, i., p. 299.

† "Engl. Chancel.," i., p. 600. *Ibid.*, p. 230, *et seq.*

‡ Master of king's jewels, 1532; chancellor of Exchequer and knighted, 1533; master of Rolls, vicar general and secretary of

was knighted, and three years later became a peer of the realm under the title of Earl of Essex. By virtue of his commission as vicar general of the king, who had according to act of parliament taken on himself "all spiritual and temporal jurisdiction in the Church of England," he had power to "exercise all spiritual jurisdiction belonging to the king for the due administration of justice in all cases touching ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and godly reformation, and redress of errors, heresies, and abuses in the said church."

The position occupied by Thomas Crumwell during the years of his power is unique in English history. As vicegerent and vicar general he was placed above the archbishops and bishops, even in convocation and other strictly ecclesiastical assemblies. Hardly was the venerable Fisher executed, than he was elected his successor as chancellor of the University of Cambridge.* Though a layman, he did not scruple to hold the deanery of Wells and other ecclesiastical benefices.† In parliament, he took precedence of the nobility of every rank by virtue of his ecclesiastical title of king's vicar general.

Armed, as he was, with supreme and absolute

state, 1534; lord privy seal and a peer of the realm, July, 1536; vicegerent in ecclesiastical causes, 1536; dean of Wells, 1537; great chamberlain, 1539.

* Calendar, ix., No. 208. (Aug. 30, 1535.)

† Record Off., Chapter H. Books, B. ⅛, *e.g.*, April 2nd, 30 H. VIII. "Item. Mr. Gostwyke for the first fruits of my lord's divers benefices." *Ibid.* "29th. The tenths for deanery of Wells."

power, both civil and spiritual, he succeeded in establishing and maintaining a complete reign of terror in free England. How he used his authority for the appointment of other agents of destruction the foregoing pages have partly told. How they together accomplished their work, every ruined abbey and every desecrated shrine in England proclaims. Every pauper is made to feel, by the cold charity extended to him in the poor houses of the country, how cruelly he was robbed of his inheritance, by the destruction and spoliation of the monastic houses of the land.

"To Crumwell," writes Froude, "belonged the rare privilege of genius to see what other men could not see, and, therefore, he was condemned to rule a generation which hated him, to do the will of God, and to perish in his success. He had no party."* The records of this period of Henry's reign bear out the assertion, that Crumwell had no following and was hated by those, who had to lean on his favour. They would not, however, suggest to most men that he "was condemned to do the will of God." Dean Hook takes a fairer estimate of his career when he says:—"Party spirit may do great things, but perhaps its most wonderful feat is the conversion of Thomas Crumwell into a saint. Protestants are so unreasonably vehement in their condemnation, of what Hugh Latimer called monkery, that they not only believe every tale that can be told against a

* "Hist.," iii., p. 444.

monk, but the '*Diabolus Monachorum*' himself they have canonized."*

It is by no means easy to realize the completeness of the autocratic power, which was placed by the king in Crumwell's hands at this time, and which he used unscrupulously to crush all opposition to his schemes, for the overthrow of the Church and the seizure of its revenues. His agents and spies were everywhere, and the most secret conversations were reported to him. The abbot in the midst of his community could not reckon upon his word being safe from the prying ears of the minister's agents. The sayings of a religious in the "shaving house" or the "frater" might be, and often were, repeated and distorted to his injury. The preacher had his sermons commented upon, and the conversations of noblemen at table were often carried to Crumwell. The mass of his correspondence that still remains, and the private notes for his "remembrances," prove conclusively that nothing was too trivial for him to inquire into. He was ever anxiously watching, in order to guard against any possible interference with his plans, and to entrap others whom he had reason to fear. Mr. Froude allows that the spy system was carried out to an enormous extent both here and abroad by lord Crumwell. "He bought his information," he writes, "anywhere and at any cost; and secret service money for such purposes he must

* "Lives of Archbishops," vi., p. 119.

have provided, like his successor in the same policy, Francis Walsingham."*

Dean Hook gives a better picture of the times when he writes, that "in every county and village, almost in every homestead he had a secret force of informers and spies. They depended on the patronage of the vicegerent, who, generous and despotic, could give as well as take away. In the enthusiasm of their selfish loyalty they were on the watch for traitors, and in the well-paid piety of their hearts they had a terrible dread of superstition."† Every modern notion of justice, or of the certainty of fair and honest trials, must be altogether laid aside in regard to the charges and convictions of this period of our national history. Crumwell was on some occasions "prosecutor, judge and jury." For a word of disapproval about the king or his minister, for a jest or slighting remark at their expense, the offender might find himself summoned before the magistrates to answer for his offence. The accused and his accusers probably never met face to face. Cases of serious import, often of life and death, were decided on the depositions of men whose interest it was to obtain convictions. Words spoken against Crumwell, or in condemnation of a tyranny subversive of the first principles of freedom, were construed into treason against the king and the state. Even suspected persons, against whom no case could be

* "Hist.," Vol. iii., p. 444.

† "Lives of Archbishops," vi., p. 98.

made out, might be summoned to have the oath of supremacy tendered to them. Their houses could be ransacked for evidence of disaffection, and they themselves brought before the council in London, to be transferred untried or unconvicted, if thought to be obstinate or otherwise obnoxious, to the Marshalsea, the Tower, or Newgate.

John Beech,* or, as he is sometimes called, Thomas Marshall, the abbot of St. John's, Colchester, is reported by a so-called guest he had entertained at his table as having expressed admiration for the constancy of bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More.† The result is, a summons to the abbot to appear before the council. Depositions‡ are obtained; he is sent to the Tower,§ and after remaining there some considerable time is executed before the gates of his abbey at Colchester.‖ There were, it is true, other things objected to abbot Marshall besides approval of the conduct of Crumwell's first victims. John Seyn, a clerk, deposes that when he had informed him of the abbot of S. Osith's surrender of his house to the king, "the abbot of S. John's answered, 'I

* It has always been represented that Thomas Marshall and John Beech were two different abbots of Colchester; the Record of Attainder (Controlment Roll, 31 Henry VIII., M. 37 d), leaves no doubt about the statement made above, that John Beech was the same as Thomas Marshall.

† B. Mus. Arund. MS., 152, f. 235 d.

‡ R. O. Crum. Cor., Vol. xxxviii., Nos. 41-2-3-4.

§ B. Mus. Cott. MS., Titus B. i., fol. 133.

‖ *Ibid.*, fol. 136. "List of those executed," John Pechy, Abb. of Colchester, at Colchester, 1 Dec., 1539.

will not say the king shall never have *my* house, but (it will be) against my will and against my heart, for I know by my learning that he cannot take it by right and law, wherefore in my conscience I cannot be content, nor he shall never have it with my heart and will.' To the which I said, 'beware of such learning as ye learned at Oxenford* when ye were young. Ye would be hanged and you are worthy. I will advise you to conform yourself as a true subject, or else you shall hinder your brethren and also yourself.' My lord, I like not this man, I fear he hath a cankered heart for he was accused but of late of traitorous words by one William Hall, but he had no witnesses."

Among the letters to Crumwell there is one from a certain William Howard, who writes to his master, saying, "I hear it is your pleasure that I should go into the country to hearken if there be any ill-disposed people in those parts that would talk or be busy any way."† Another correspondent recommends for the service of Crumwell an informer against religious persons.‡

The libraries of monasteries were ransacked for evidence of opposition to the new state of affairs, and even the cherished store of pious books belonging to the country priest—his service books and his very manuals of piety—were overhauled to search

* Thomas Marshall (Benedictine) was B.D. in 1511 and D.D. on 20th Ap., 1515. Boase's "Register," i., p. 63.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xviii., No. 1.

‡ B. Mus. Cott. MS. Cleop., E., iv., 127 (106).

out proofs, of his clinging to the faith and practice of his fathers. From Bath abbey, for example, the zealous doctor Layton writes: "Ye shall herewith receive a book of Our Lady's miracles well able to match the Canterbury tales. Such a book of dreams as ye never saw, which I found in the library."* Another of Crumwell's agents, a certain "Ralph Lane, junior," reports that according to his master's commands he went after "the books of one Sir Thomas Cantwell, parson of Hardwick . . which had been brought to a poor man's house in Whitchurch." Having examined them, he selected and forwarded to his employer five volumes "belonging to the said parson, whereof three are entitled *Homeliari Johis Echii*, being all three dated A.D. 1438; one book of the life of *St. Thomas Becket,* and a missal wherein is the word *papa* 'throughoutly uncorrected.'"†

Another informer of a different class, William Waldegrave, writes: "There is a chaplain of my lady Waldegrave, my grandam, which is a papist and causes (those) here to hold off from the truth, hath in his mass book daily this Thomas Beckett's name with all his pestiferious collects."‡ So also the curate of Wrington, Somerset, "will not abrogate the name of Thomas Becket." This was taken in

* Calendar, ix., No. 42.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xix., No. 20. See also 21, where the library of Dr. Lussh, the vicar of Aylesbury, is searched. Also xliv., 35, where the prior of Twynham is ordered to search for certain books.

‡ *Ibid.*, xlvi., 14.

all cases, as a certain sign of wrong-headed obstinacy, and an intention to resist the king's changes. The monks of Christchurch, Canterbury, got into trouble for singing the old *domnum apostolicum* in their litanies, and the priest who sang high mass was reported for keeping the pope's name in the Canon.

The celebrated Miles Coverdale was one of Crumwell's zealous informers, and we learn from some of his letters the methods adopted to force compliance upon the people. He writes, for example, to Crumwell to say that two men have come and reported to him* "that in a glass window of our lady's chapel in the church of Henley on Thames the image of Thomas Becket with the whole feigned story of his death is suffered to stand still. Not only this, but that all the beams, irons, and candlesticks (whereon tapers and lights were wont to be set up unto images) remain still untaken down, whereby the poor, simple, unlearned people believe that they shall have liberty to set up their candles again unto images, and that the old fashion shall shortly return.† . . . Now, though Sir Walter Stoner, Knight, be the king's justice of

* R. O. Crum. Corr., vii., Fol. 64.

† See also *ibid.*, xlvi., No. 31. Robt. Ward's description of the windows in the church of S. Thomas Acres:—"I saw on the north side of the church, certain windows with St. Thomas' life displayed, and in especial I noted a superstitious and a popish remembrance in the absolution of the king that was in that time, that is thus set forth: There be divers monks portrayed with rods in their hands, and the king kneeling naked before a monk, as he should be beaten at the shrine of Saint Thomas."

peace at Henley, yet (under your correction) I reckon great and notable negligence in the bishop of Lincoln, which, being so nigh, doth not weed out such faults. Yea, I fear it be as evil or worse in many more places of his diocese."

"It is my duty also to signify unto your good lordship the great oversight of the stationers of London, which for their license and gains are not ashamed to sell still, such primers as corrupt the king's subjects. A great number of them have my neighbours brought unto me, and a great sort of other most ungracious popish books (both contrary to God and the king's highness) have I taken up within the precincts of Newbury, and will do more if your good lordship do give me your authority, or bid me do it. I humbly beseech you (my most dear and singular good lord) to have your loving answer by the mouth of this bearer, young Mr. Winchcombe, and to know your good pleasure what I shall do with these popish books that I have already; whether I shall burn them at the market-cross or no."

A few weeks before, Coverdale had written in the same way, pointing out that the priests were not sufficiently energetic in carrying out the intentions of the king and his minister. The following day he wrote again, to say "that as methinketh (I speak under correction) a great number of the priests of this realm are run in premunire unto the king, inasmuch as they have not utterly extinct all such ecclesiastical service, as is against his grace's most

lawful supremacy and prerogative. For in the feast, called Cathedra S. Petri, a great part of their matins is plainly a maintenance of the bishop of Rome's usurped power. This is evident in all the great matin books of the church of Newbury, and I doubt not but it is so likewise in many churches more. I found it the seventh day of this month, and I wonder at it, considering that (it) is so long since the act was made, for the abolishing of all such usurped authority."*

All classes of society throughout the country were made to feel, that they were subjected to the omnipotent will of Thomas Crumwell and to the petty tyranny of those, who thought to win his favour by proving that his power was above all law and justice.† When the chapel of Our Lady of Walsingham had been despoiled by the king's commissioners and the image taken away, a report got noised abroad of some grace or favour granted at the old shrine. Sir Roger Townsend went there to find out the author of the report, which might remind the people of their old attachment to this place of pilgrimage, and so beget trouble. In a letter written

* *Ibid.*, vii., f. 65.

† Foxe, v., p. 896, ed. 1846, gives an instance of this. "Hereunto also pertaineth the example of friar Bartley, who wearing still his friar's cowl after the suppression of religious houses, Crumwell, coming into Paul's churchyard and espying him in Rheines shop, 'Yea,' said he, 'will not that cowl of yours be left off yet? And, if I hear by one o'clock that this apparel be not changed, thou shalt be hanged immediately for example of all others.'"

to Crumwell on January 20th he thus describes the result of his visit :—

"There was a poor woman of Wells beside Walsingham that imagined a false tale. . And upon the trial thereof by my examination from one person to another to the number of six persons, and at last came to her that she was the reporter thereof, and to be the very author of the same as far as my conscience and perceiving could lead me. I committed her, therefore, to the ward of the constables of Walsingham. The next day after, being market day there, I caused her to be set in the stocks in the morning,* and about nine of the clock, when the said market was fullest of people, with a paper set about her head, written with these words upon the same, '*a reporter of false tales*,' was set in a cart and so carried about the marketsted and other streets of the town, staying in divers places where most people assembled, young people and boys of the town casting snowballs at her. This done and executed, she was brought to the stocks again, and there set till the market was ended. This was her penance, for I *knew no law* otherwise to punish her but *my discretion*, trusting it shall be a warning to other light persons in such wise to order themselves. Howbeit I cannot but perceive that the said image is not yet out of some of their heads."†

* Note that it was in the depth of winter and snow on the ground, as will be seen.

† Ellis, "Orig. Lett.," third ser. iii., p. 162.

A Worcester man named Thomas Emaus, servant to Mr. Evans, got into difficulties for blaming the spoliation of the shrine of Our Lady of Worcester. He was tried by a mixed commission, headed by Latimer, the bishop of the city. It was proved against him that he had come to the church, and leaning on the shoulder of one Roger Cromps, had said :—"Lady art thou stript now, I have seen the day that as clean men hath been stript at a pair of gallows, as were they that stript thee. Then he entered into the chapel" and "knelt down, saying his Pater and Ave, and kissed the image and turned to the people and said 'though Our Lady's coat and her jewells be taken away from her, the similitude is no worse to pray unto having sorrow, than it was before.'" The depositions carry on the story of this bold and turbulent fellow, who confessed to the charge made against him, no further than his committal to safe custody.*

Never in the history of England had words and signs of disapprobation of the action of a minister been regarded as treason to the country. Yet words spoken in anger or jest of Crumwell or his arbitrary measures were made the subject of serious inquiries, and were sufficient to surround those who were bold enough to utter them with grave peril. For words so spoken by a priest in Herefordshire, the Ludlow

* R. O. Crum. Cor., xlvi., No. 19. The offence was committed on the eve of the feast of the Assumption, 1537. The examination took place on the 19th of August.

justices apprehended him and placed him in gaol. They then proceeded to ransack his house in search of evidence to convict him and not being able to find anything which could be turned against him, although they searched even his private papers, they determined to ask further instructions from Crumwell. Meantime they luckily found a bag containing £76 16s. of the unfortunate priest's savings. From this they proceeded to pay themselves for the work already done. On that score they took £20 (about £240 of our present money), and gave a like sum to be equally divided between the scribe who had made the inventory of the priest's effects and the lucky messenger who conveyed the intimation of their righteous doings to their employer. We may fairly conclude what they thought would be the final fate of their victim by their deliberate division of his little property.

It is impossible to peruse the records of these years of Crumwell's supremacy without feeling deeply, that even a pretence of justice and fair dealing was little thought of, that prisoners were left to languish untried in the gaols of the country, and to die in numbers from pestilence,* which was dignified on the public rolls into "a visitation of divine providence." The long lists of those who were each term called upon to find security for their good behaviour or convicted of assembling for riotous purposes, are sufficient proofs of the efforts made to

* See the lists, twelve and twenty at a time, on the "Controlment Rolls" for these years.

extinguish the last remnants of a struggle for freedom from the masterful rule of Crumwell and his creatures.

"The persecutions," says dean Hook, "under Henry originated in avarice or a desire to maintain the peace of the country, to the infraction of which the people were at the same time excited by the lust of plunder on the part of the king and his ministers."* Of the unjust and unscrupulous character of Crumwell's personal dealings as to these persecutions, the notes he has left in his own handwriting do not admit of any doubt. "Item to remember," he writes, "to go to the Charterhouse myself. Item what the king his pleasure shall be touching the learned man in the tower. Item to send for the abbot of Boxley with speed. Item for the indictment against the abbot of Reading and others. Item certain persons to be sent to the tower for the further examination of the abbot of Glaston." And, to quote once more an example more wonderful in its calm ignoring of justice than the rest: "Item to see that the evidence be well sorted and the indictments well drawn against the said abbots and their complices. Item the abbot Reading to be sent down to be *tried and executed* at Reading with his complices. Item the abbot of Glaston to be tried at Glaston, and also executed there with his complices."†

* "Lives of Archbishops," Vol. vi., p. 102.

† B. Mus. Cott. MS. Titus, B. i., fols. 422, 435. The "learned man" is Sir T. Moore, 439, 441.

How the persons, who were sent to the Tower "for the further examination of the abbot of Glaston" fared, we do not know, but it is certain that these examinations were sometimes conducted whilst the unfortunate victim was tortured on the rack,* and that Crumwell himself on occasions superintended the torture. When an Irish monk had been caught on a ship near the English coast the minister writes to the king: "We cannot as yet get at the pith of his credence, whereby I am advised to-morrow to go to the Tower and see him set in the *bracks* (rack), and by *torment* compelled to confess the truth."† It is a matter of history that he attended in state with his officers to witness the sufferings of friar Forest, burning to death in Smithfield for refusing to accept the doctrine of the royal supremacy. That Henry quite entered into Crumwell's views as to setting the ordinary principles of justice aside, is seen in the despatch he wrote to the duke of Norfolk dictating the method he was to adopt in suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace. "Our pleasure is that before you shall close up our banner again, you shall cause such dreadful execution to be done upon a good number of the inhabitants of every town, village and hamlet that have offended, as they may be a fearful spectacle to all others hereafter that would practise any like matter, remembering that it

* See Ellis' "Letters," 3rd series, iii., 70.

† B. Mus. Cott. MS. Titus, B. i., fol. 259; printed Ellis, 2nd series, ii., 133.

should be much better that these traitors should perish in their unkind traitorous follies than that so slender punishments should be done upon them as the dread thereof should not be a warning to others. Finally, forasmuch as all these troubles have ensued by the solicitation of traitorous conspiracies of the monks and canons of these parts, we desire you, at such places as they have conspired and kept their houses with force, since the appointment at Doncaster, you shall, without *pity* or *circumstance*, cause all the monks and canons that be in any wise faulty to *be tied up without further* delay or *ceremony*." *

The following letter from lord Crumwell to the earl of Chester, president of the marches of Wales, shows the rough and ready justice with which the king's minister was prepared to carry out his master's royal will:—"After my right hearty commendations. Whereas the king's majesty about a twelvemonth past gave a pardon to a company of lewd persons within this realm calling themselves Gipcians,† for a most shamefull and detestable murder committed amongst them, with a special proviso, inserted by their own consents, that unless they should all avoid this his grace's realm by a certain day long since expired, it should be lawful to all his grace's officers to *hang* them in all places of his realm where they might be apprehended, without any further examination or trial after form of law, as in their letters patent of the said pardon is expressed. His grace, hearing

* Quoted by Blunt, "Reformation," p. 365. † *i.e.*, Gipsies.

that they yet linger here within his realm, not avoiding the same according to his commandment and their own promise hath commanded me to signify unto you and the shires next adjoining, whether any of the said persons calling themselves Egyptians, or that hath heretofore called themselves Egyptians shall happen to enter or travel in the same. And in case you should hear or know of any such, be they *men or women,* that you shall compel them to depart to the next port of the sea to the place where they shall be taken, and either, without delay, upon the first wind that may convey them into any part beyond the seas, to take shipping and to pass therein to outward parts, or, if they shall in any wise break that commandment, without any tract to see them executed according to the king's highness' said letters patent remaining of record in his chancery, which, with these, shall be your discharge in that behalf: not failing to accomplish the tenor hereof with all effect and diligence, without sparing upon any commission, licence or placard that they may show or allege for themselves to the contrary, as ye tender his grace's pleasure, which also is, that you shall give notice to all justices of the peace in that county where you reside, and the shires adjacent, that they may accomplish the tenour hereof accordingly. Thus fare you heartily well. The fifth day of December, in the 29th year of his majesty's reign."*

* Ellis, "Orig. Letts.," 1st Ser., ii., p. 100.

We may judge, by an instance recorded by the historian Stow, that at the height of his fame the all-powerful minister was not less arbitrary as a man, than as the agent of a despotic king's will. In his "Survey of London" Stow says:—"On the south side and at the west end of this church (Augustine friars in London)," "many fair houses are builded namely in Throgmorton Street one very large and spacious, builded in the place of old and small tenements by Thomas Cromwell, master of the rolls &c. . . This house being finished, and having some reasonable plot of ground left for a garden, he caused the pales of the garden adjoining to the north part thereof on a sudden to be taken down, twenty-two foot to be measured forth right into the north of every man's ground, a line there to be drawn, a trench to be cast, a foundation laid and a high brick wall to be builded. My father had a garden there, and a house standing close to his south pale, this house they loosed from the ground and bare upon rollers into my father's garden twenty two foot, ere my father heard thereof, no warning was given him, nor other answer, when he spake to the surveyors of that work, but that their master Sir Thomas commanded them so to do; no man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his ground. My father paid his whole rent which was six shillings and eight pence for that half which was left. Thus much of mine own knowledge have I thought good to note, that the sudden rising of some men, causeth them to forget themselves. The

company of the drapers in London bought this house, and now the same is their common hall."*

It is impossible to read the numerous letters addressed to Thomas Crumwell and his instructions to his agents during the period of the suppression of the monasteries, and to credit him with even honesty in regard to his dealings with them. Although their destruction was a foregone conclusion, and the royal commissioners were fully instructed in their master's purpose, he bids them expressly repudiate any such intention on the part of the king. Doctor Layton writes from Norfolk to his master, that he has done his best to stop the rumour that the monasteries are all to go down; that he has told the monks and their neighbours that such a report is a slander on the king's majesty, and adds that he "now understands that your commandment therefore given me in your gallery was much more weighty, than I at the time judged or supposed or would have believed if I had not seen the very experience thereof."† The commandment was evidently to prevent the loss of plate or valuables got rid of by the monks, in view of the threatened seizure of their property, by falsely declaring that the king had no such designs of destruction.‡

* Stow, "Survey of London," Ed. 1602, p. 180. Foxe has recorded other instances of Crumwell's arbitrary mode of acting.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xx., No. 16.

‡ The same declaration that the king had no intention of suppressing the monasteries that remained, and that he "would not in any wise interrupt you in your state and kind of living," is

During the eight years that Crumwell ruled England as a despot, the plunder he amassed by public and private spoliation must have been immense. The only possible policy for the monastic bodies was one of attempted conciliation. By liberal donations, presents and bribes to their supreme governor, they hoped to buy off the evil day. Demands for leases, grants and pensions, were made on the monasteries by Crumwell, or in his name, without hesitation or consideration. Generally what was asked was at once granted. The monks had no option, except the prospect of involving their houses in greater difficulties by refusal. Sometimes they pleaded earnestly to be allowed to say no, when some farm or pension was asked, that was necessary to support their very existence, or to maintain the poor who depended on them.

The account book* of Crumwell's steward, Thomas Avery, shows that large sums of money came to him by way of presents from all manner of persons, ecclesiastical and lay. Gifts of £10 and £20, for the new year, frequently appear in its pages. Archbishops, bishops, abbots and priors, nobles and commoners, officials and unknown laymen, towns, colleges and cathedral chapters, all sent in their fees and new year donations, to propitiate the favour

made in the draft of a letter from the king to reassure the monasteries, probably in Crumwell's handwriting. B. Mus., Cleop. E. iv., fol. 86.

* R. O. Chapter House Books, $B\frac{1}{8}$.

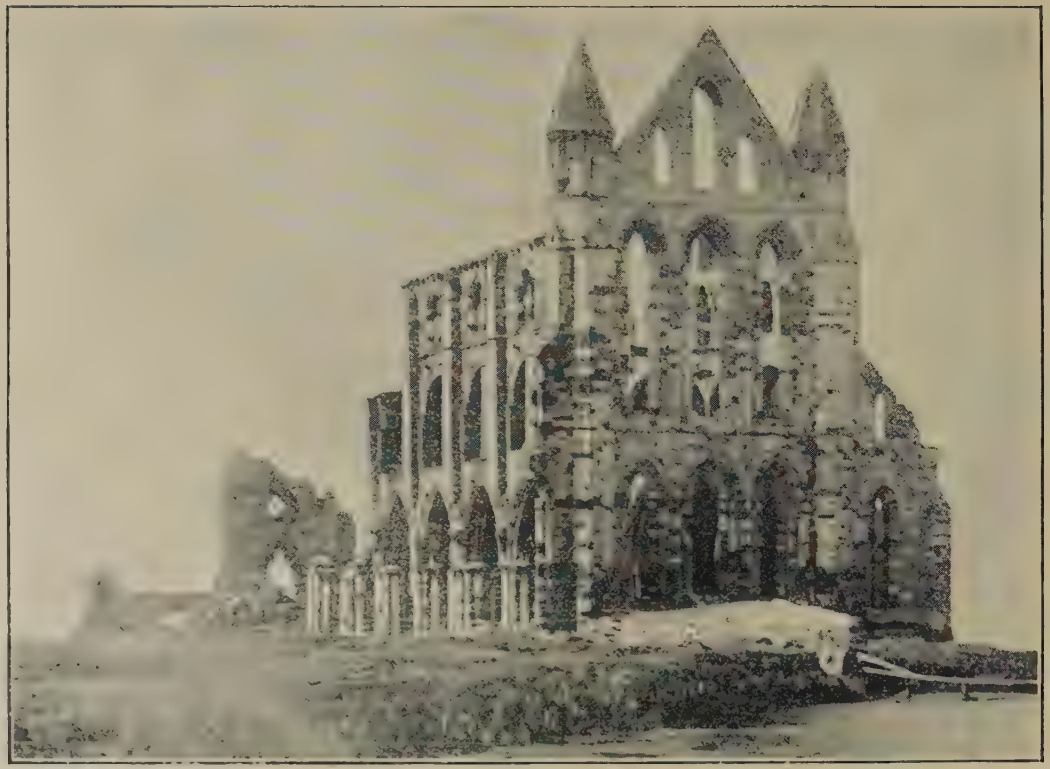
of the great man. Some of the amounts are startling. On the 1st January, 1539, for instance, the account book records money presents for the new year of £800 (more than £9,000 of our present money). Fees of sums, from £10 to £50, flow in for visitations of monasteries and dioceses and for installation to ecclesiastical and civil offices. In the year 1538, more than £300 was paid, by the prior of St. Swithin's, Winchester, into the private purse of Crumwell. At one time the prior of Rochester pays £100, at another the abbot of Evesham £266. The agents he has employed in the visitation of the monasteries, Layton, Legh, Ap Rice and Petre, pay large sums in discharge of debts, as their master's share in the visitation fees and as presents.

Cranmer, who certainly feared and distrusted his powerful ecclesiastical superior, thought it necessary to secure to him £40 a year "as a memorial of his friendship."* From Rowland Lee, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Crumwell demands £100 in return for the grant of some priory secured to him, but this demand the bishop was bold enough to refuse, saying that he had never promised it, and could not spare it.†

Bribes of all kinds, unmistakable in their purposes, were offered to him by those who had best reason to know the secret of gaining what they desired. Layton, the most unscrupulous of his tools, is fre-

* More than £400 a year of our money.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xxv., No. 11.



Whitby Abbey.

quently the channel by which money of this kind is offered. For the elections at Fountains, Gisborough, Whitby and many other places, large bribes are offered to Crumwell, in return for a nomination. If he will make a certain monk abbot of Vale Royal "he will be contented," writes Sir Piers Dutton, "to give your mastership a £100 in hand, and further to do you as large pleasure as any man shall."* From a certain John Parkyns there are two offers of £100 for some coveted office "and faithful service during my natural life."† William Penison is anxious to obtain the office of receiver at the dissolution of Reading abbey. "Herewith," he consequently writes, "I present unto your lordship a diamond set in a slender gold ring, supposing for proportion and compass thereof, the same somewhat meet to be set in the breast of a George . . And where I moved unto your lordship not long ago of the dissolution of Reading abbey, now so it is, that I am provoked to signify unto you (as I am informed) that the abbot there preparing and looking for the same, selleth sheep, corn, with woods and other things, whereof he may make money."‡ A month later the writer has to thank Crumwell for the office he had thus requested. Sometimes, however, the minister does not get his money quite so easily. William Arnold, abbot of Miravale, writes that he learns from Dr. Legh, that Crumwell is looking for

* *Ibid.*, ix., fol. 100. ‡ *Ibid.*, xxxii., 15, 16.
‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., xxxii., Nos. 37, 38.

the £40 "promised you for your trouble in my regard. I have already paid for your use through serjeant Thornton £100, since he demanded this for your pains. He confessed to the receipt of the money, affirming that it is paid already to your mastership." "As to your fee," he concludes, "which Dr. Legh says Mr. Thornton promised you, I never knew anything about it," but of course I must pay and ask you to take it in "goods worth."*

The reports of the coming suppression, brought many tempting bribes to spare the doomed houses. The abbot of Pipwell will "do all that a poor man can to gratify your lordship . . with £200."† If Peterborough‡ may be allowed to stand Crumwell will find it worth his while, and to avert the fate of dissolution from Colchester he is offered as much as £2,000 (£24,000 of our money). In fact, in the matter of bribes, the character of Crumwell had been rightly judged by the religious. For them, it was the last chance to purchase further existence by liberal donations. The prior of Durham, in a solemn letter, proposes to increase the annuity of £5, the monastery of S. Cuthbert had hitherto given him to £10.§ The prioress of Catesby will give him a hundred marks to buy a gelding, and the prayers of the convent for life, if he can persuade the king to accept the 2,000 marks she has offered through the queen, as ransom for her house.‖ Richard, the

* *Ibid.*, xxix., No. 3. † *Ibid.*, xxxi., No. 51. ‡ Wright, 179.
§ Ellis, "Orig. Letts.," 3rd ser., iii., p. 44. ‖ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

abbot of Leicester, sends £40, as he understands "it should be your pleasure,"* and his successor, the abbot John, who had to pay a yearly tax of £240, and was deeply in debt, sends a present in kind, of "a brace of fat oxen and a score of fat wethers." The abbess of Shaftesbury, and her neighbour the abbot of Cerne, each offer Crumwell £100 to spare their houses. In the same way the interference of the all-powerful minister with legal obligations was besought, under promises of substantial reward. Thus Robert Blakeney, whom Gostwyk, Crumwell's secretary, describes as "mine old acquaintance, the prior of Tynemouth," endeavours by a good bribe to purchase exemption from the payment of an annuity to which the convent was legally bound. His predecessor in the office had paid some 200 marks in fees, and although the value of the monastery had diminished he still professed his willingness to "compound" with Crumwell for that amount, provided the abbot of St. Albans were made to secure the office to him for life "by convent seal." Beyond this, the new prior desired to escape the payment of an annuity, which "my lady Mary Carey, now Stafford, had granted to her by my predecessor under convent seal." It was for 100 marks yearly, and Robert Blakeney did not think she had done anything, "nor does intend to do, as far as I can learn," anything deserving such a payment. He thinks the house, "by reason

* *Ibid.*, ii., p. 313.

of the first-fruits and other charges," cannot afford it, and so has refused to pay it any longer. The chancellor, however, had sent him an order to do so, and hence he begs Crumwell "to take it into your hands, and for your pains, as your lordship has an annuity from me of twenty nobles, it shall be twenty marks, and that not only to yourself, but to Mr. Gregory, your son, if it chance him to survive."*

As for presents, they come pouring in upon him on all sides, fish from Croyland, apples from Kingslangley, partridges and pheasants from Harrow, Irish hawks from Bath, geldings from Tewkesbury—these are but samples of the endless variety and number of his presents, not the least curious of which is £40 from one John Hunter "towards furnishing of your cellar with wine, in recompense" for Crumwell's part in a law case relating to the property of the writer's wife. His accounts reveal that considerable sums were received, in a way to leave little doubt that they were really "secret service" money. For example, "in a purse," "in a white leather purse," "in a crimson satteen purse," "in a handkerchief," "in a glove," "at Arundel in a glove," "in a pair of gloves under a cushion, in the middle window of the gallery." Some of the other items of receipt are hardly less suspicious, for example, "a chain which melted acquired for my lord £482" (more than £5,000 of our money). "Trapes, the goldsmith, in

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xiv., 63; Vol. xlv., No. 37.

full payment, £1,348 15s. 2d.," and "Bowes for 144 ozs. of gold, £274 11s. 0d."*

"In Crumwell's time," writes Froude, "the questionable practice of most great men of his time, the practice of receiving pensions and presents for general support and patronage was carried to an extent which, even then, perhaps appeared excessive."† His share of the monastic spoils has yet to be calculated. A great deal came into his hands by way of grant from the crown,‡ and much more by private arrangement with those to whom, perhaps through his instrumentality, it had been given. His accounts show, that during the years of suppression he was expending large sums in the purchasing of estates. In the last two years of his life he must have spent some £10,000 in this way, a very large sum in those days, and equal to about £120,000 of our money. Large amounts of money pass between him and his agents, which have a suspicious look. Sir Thomas Elliot§ promises him the first year's fruits from any lands of suppressed monasteries

* R. O. Chapter H. Books, B ⅛, fol. 25, &c.

† "Hist.," iii. p. 444.

‡ Amongst these must be enumerated Lewes priory, in Sussex, with its cell at Melton-Mowbray, in Leicestershire; the priories of Mickelham, in Sussex; Modenham, in Kent; St. Osithe's, in Essex; Alcester, in Warwick; Yarmouth, in Norfolk; and Laund, in Leicestershire. His nephew, Sir Richard, the great-grandfather of the Protector, had Ramsey abbey, Hinchinbrooke, Sawtry, St. Neot's, Neath abbey, St. Helen's, London, and other property of monasteries he helped to suppress as a royal commissioner.

§ Strype, "Eccl. Mems.," i., 1, 399, 407.

granted to him by his intervention, and his "remembrances" are full of suggestive hints on this matter.* "Item," he notes, "to remember Warren for one monastery, Mr. Gostwyke† for a monastery, John Freeman for Spalding, Mr. Kingsmill for Wherwell, *myself* for Laund.‡ Item to remember John Godsalve for something, for he hath need," and "Item to remember to know the true value of the goods of Castleacre for my part thereof." Whether he got these goods does not appear, but those of the priory of Lewes came into his possession and were sold by him, as appears from his account book. "May 19th, Thomas Busshope, for the sale of divers goods and cattle at Lewes in part payment of a more sum, £467 13s. 0½d." Other items of the sale produced nearly £1,200, a large total from the spoils of one monastery for his private purse, representing

* B. Mus. Cott. MS. Titus, B. 1, fls. 446-459.

† There were large money transactions between Gostwyke and Crumwell at this period. The former, in one month, pays "on his bills obligatory" more than £3,000, and, on the other hand, Crumwell pays by "way of *present*" at one time £1,000, and eighteen months later £2,000.

‡ Illustrating this "remembrance" of "Laund for himself" there is a letter from Thomas Frysby, a canon of the house, accompanying a present of cheese to Crumwell. In it he says that his good master need not thank the abbot for the gift, and concludes: "Pleaseth it your good mastership to call to your remembrance when ye lay here with us at Launde abbey some time, ye would take pains to walk with me or my brethren about our business." He made himself, so it seems, well acquainted with the property. See Blunt, 1, p. 377.

some £17,000 of our money.* Crumwell also received a grant of the priory of Lewes, and having made some alterations and removed superfluous buildings, the record of which appears in his expenses, he allowed his son Gregory, then lately married, to go there with his wife to occupy the monastery from whence the monks had been expelled. Gregory writes to his father to say Mrs. Crumwell found the buildings "very commodious."†

In his expenditure Crumwell appears to have been lavish. His household cost him, for some time at least, more than £100 a month, and he indulged considerably his taste for building. In former days he had warned his master, Wolsey, to beware of this very attractive but dangerously fascinating and expensive taste, but when in the height of his power, he himself had buildings in progress at the "Rolls," Austin Friars, Hackney, Mortlake and at Ewhurst. He purchased estates‡ as he could get the opportunity, some the spoils of dissolved monasteries, some the hereditary lands of the old nobles, sold to meet their liabilities. No doubt, with Crumwell's

* Chapter House Books, B. ⅛, fol. 70.

† R. O. Crum. Cor., vii., fol. 171.

‡ As examples, in his account book we find:—"Lord Latimer, the purchase of land, £280; the chancellor of augmentations, ditto, £800; Sir Gregory Somerset, purchase of his house at Kew, £200; Lord Clynton, purchase of manors at Golston, Folkeston, and Walton, £2,374; the prior of Folkeston, £263 1s. 3d.; Sir John Dudley, manor of Holden, &c., £3,490; Sir Thomas Pope, manor of Dunford by Wandsworth, £266 13s. 4d.," &c., &c.

eye for his own interests, many of them were as great bargains as the annuity of £84 a year seems to have been, which he purchased of Sir William Gascoyne for £333.

Crumwell also indulged considerably in a taste for goldsmith and jeweller's work. Cups, ewers, and trenchers of gold; platters, dishes and saucers of silver by the dozen, are expenses incurred to "Mr. Trappes of London," John of Antwerp, and Bastian the jeweller; while we would gladly know something more of some of the items of account, such as "the cross of gold of Saint Albans," for which he paid £106 to "Aston the auditor," and "the diamond and ruby," sold by "Jenyns the jeweller" to him, for the enormous price of £2,000.

On his amusements Crumwell spent his money freely. At bowls, cards and dice he appears to have lost sums varying from twenty shillings to £30. He was, moreover, liberal in treating the king and court to masks, shows and other spectacles, and minstrels, hobby-horses and players all come in for a share of the plunder of monastery and convent. More than the yearly pension of many a monk and nun, went "for trimming of Divine Providence when she played before the king," and for "the collar of velvet for the strange beast my lord gave to the king."

The taste of the newly-made peer in matters of dress would seem to have been hardly less expensive, if we may judge by the payments to Sir Richard

Gressham for silks and velvets, and from the strange item of "two satin nightcaps for my lord." His presents were almost regal in number and amount. Some items, however are suggestive of other motives than liberality and seem to partake of the nature of money-lending, an occupation in which, even at the summit of his power, Crumwell continued to engage.*

One other trait in the character of Crumwell must be here briefly noticed. That he was the patron and abettor of the shocking blasphemies, which disgraced the country during his administration does not admit of doubt. His was a policy of destruction of faith, as well as of the rights of property. Without religion himself, he did not hesitate to sap the foundations of Christian faith in others, and by encouraging and subsidizing a crowd of vulgar satirists on holy and even sacred things, he threw open the flood gates of scepticism and infidelity. "He was," writes doctor Maitland, "the great patron of ribaldry, and the protector of the ribalds, of the low jester, the filthy ballad-monger, the ale-house singers, and 'hypocritical mockers in feasts,' in short, of all the blasphemous mocking and scoffing which disgraced the protestant party at the time of the reformation. . It was the result of design and policy earnestly and elaborately pursued by the man possessing for all such purposes the highest place

* We have frequent repayments on "bills obligatory"—loans without security apparently, and loans similar to those of a pawnbroker—"on a statue," "on another statue," "on some plate."

and power in the land."* To this man were handed over the monasteries of England, for reformation or destruction, upon his word and that of his creatures, is made to depend their title to good or evil fame.

It remains to speak of the ending to his career, which took place in well-merited infamy. By a nemesis of fate he passed to the scaffold suddenly, almost untried and certainly unheard in his own defence, and this was possibly by virtue of an act he had devised and obtained, to get rid of inconvenient rivals and others, bold enough to oppose his lawless policy or thwart his schemes. Rumours had not been wanting that the minister's influence over Henry had not been so paramount for some time before his final disgrace. The king to whom Wolsey had "kneeled the space sometimes of three hours to persuade from his will and appetite," but without success, did not become more easy to lead in Crumwell's time. Report spoke of scenes in the audience chamber, when the royal wilfulness developed such an extreme of passion as to result in the boxing of lord Crumwell's ears, right soundly. Castillon, the French ambassador, had heard his majesty read a lesson to the lord privy seal, and tell him "he might be fit to look after

* "The Reformation," p. 236. Foxe, v., p. 403, glories in this characteristic of his great Christian hero, Crumwell, and instances "The Fantassie of Idolatory" as a specimen of the work done under his patronage. With Dr. Maitland we are content to let the work speak for itself.

household duties but not to manage the business of kings."*

On 11th June, 1540, Marillac, who had succeeded Castillon as ambassador of France, wrote that he had heard, an hour before sending his despatch, that Crumwell had been sent to the Tower. He added that it is impossible to foretell how this arrest might change the whole public policy of the king, "even as regards innovations in religious matters in which Crumwell had been the prime mover."† Henry was anxious that Marillac should understand fully the reason of the minister's downfall, and at once sent, asking him to suspend his judgment till their next interview, when he would explain everything. In the meantime he was to believe, that it was because Crumwell had been found to be a heretic at heart, and had supported false German teaching in spite of the king's wishes, boasting that he was powerful enough to do what he liked.‡

On the 23rd June, the ambassador received a full account of what had taken place, and wrote the substance of his information to the Constable of France. From this letter§ it appears that Crumwell was altogether unprepared for his downfall. When the lieutenant of the Tower entered the council chamber at Westminster and informed him that he was ordered to take him prisoner, Crumwell, moved with indignation, threw his hat on the floor,

* "Inventaire analytique des Archives, &c., ed Kaulek," No. 62, May 14, 1538.

† *Ibid.*, No. 226. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 189. § *Ibid.*, No. 231.

and declared that he had never done anything but for the king and in his service. Some of the council called out, that he was a traitor, and must be judged "by the laws he had himself made, and which," as Marillac explains, "were so sanguinary that a few words, often perhaps spoken inadvertently or in good faith, could be construed into the crime of high treason." The duke of Norfolk tore the order of St. George from his neck, and the Garter was also taken from him. Before the news spread, Crumwell had already been lodged in the Tower, and the people obtained their first knowledge of the arrest by seeing the king's officers, attended by a large retinue of archers, enter the fallen minister's house for the purpose of searching it.

Lord Crumwell had few friends and many enemies. The duke of Norfolk assured Marillac that he was to die "by the most ignoble punishment then in use,"* and, as the ambassador considered, his only staunch friend was Cranmer, "who dared not speak a word in his favour."† By the day following the arrest, Henry had already begun to distribute his fallen favourite's offices. Through the streets of London he sent an officer who "publicly proclaimed that henceforth no one should call him 'Lord Privy Seal' or by any other title or dignity, but simply 'Thomas Crumwell, cloth carder,' and that the king had taken from him every privilege and title of nobility, which he had ever granted him."‡

* *Ibid.*, No. 197. † *Ibid.*, No. 227. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 231.

The record of his attainder* gives more information about the charges brought against him than can be learnt about many of *his* victims. After stating how much the king had done for him, the bill continues: "Yet nevertheless Thomas Crumwell, now earl of Essex, your majesty took and received into your trusty service, the same Thomas then being a man of very base and low degree. And for singular trust and confidence, which your majesty bore and had in him, did not only erect the said Thomas into the state of an earl and enriched him with many gifts as well of goods, as of lands and offices," but also made him "one of your most trusty counsellers as well concerning your grace's supreme jurisdictions ecclesiastical, as your most high secret affairs temporal." Nevertheless, it has been proved that he has been "a false and corrupt traitor," setting at liberty those he thought fit, and selling "for manyfold sums of money" various grants, even to foreigners and aliens.

Also "further taking upon him your power, sovereign lord, divers and many times most traitorously hath constituted . . subjects to be commissioners in many your great urgent and weighty causes and affairs executed in this realm, without the assent or knowledge of your highness." Also he publicly boasted "that he was sure of you" to do what he wished. Further, he hath of his own will granted passports, and being a "detestable heretic"

* Parliament Roll, 32 Henry VIII., m. 60.

has sent over England a great number of false and erroneous books, leading people to a disbelief "in the most holy and Blessed Sacrament of the altar and other articles of the christian religion." And after these books were translated, he declared the "material heresy so translated, good" and also declared "that it was lawful for every christian man to be a minister of the said sacrament as well as a priest.'"

As vicegerent under the great seal, he "licensed divers persons detected and suspected of heresy, openly to preach and teach" saying "that he would fight even against the king to maintain these heresies. . And then and there most traitorously pulled out his dagger and held it up on high saying these words: Or else this dagger thrust me to the heart if I would not die in that quarrel against them all, and I trust if I live a year or two, it shall not lie in the king's power to resist or let it if he would."

And moreover, the said Thomas Crumwell "hath acquired and obtained into his possession by oppression, bribery, extorted power and false promises" immense sums of money and treasure. He further held the nobles of the realm "in great disdain, derision and detestation," and on being reminded that others had been attainted, declared "on the last day of January in the 31st year" of the reign, at the parish of St. Martin in the field, most arrogantly and traitorously, that if "the lords would handle him so, he would give them such a breakfast as never was

made in England, and the proudest of them should know to the great peril and danger as well of your majesty as of your heirs and successors."

Posterity may be grateful that the avenging hand came upon him so suddenly. His arrest, unexpected by all, gave him no time to destroy the papers which had accumulated in the course of his administration, and which we may well believe he would have been unwilling for other eyes than his own to see. On the morning of the tenth of June, 1540, he was supreme in England,* the evening saw him a prisoner in the Tower, and his fate practically sealed. After begging in the most servile terms that his life might be spared, he was brought out to the scaffold on Tower hill, on the 28th of June. John Stow, the chronicler,

* In a letter to Bullinger from Rich. Hilles (Zurish Letts. 105) the following account is given:—"Not long before the death of Cromwell, the king advanced him, and granted him large houses and riches, and more public offices, together with very extensive and lucrative domains; and in the same way he also endowed queen Anne a short time before he beheaded her. But some persons now suspect that this was all an artifice, to make people conclude that he must have been a most wicked traitor. . It was from a like artifice, as some think, that the king conferred upon Cromwell's son Gregory, who was almost a fool, his father's title and many of his domains, while he was yet living in prison, that he might more readily confess his offences against the king at the time of execution. . There are, moreover, other parties who assert, with what truth God knows, that Cromwell was threatened to be burned at the stake and not to die by the axe, unless at the time of the execution he would acknowledge his crimes against the king, and that he then said, 'I am altogether a miserable sinner!'" See Lewis' "Sanders," p. 149.

records the following speech. "I am come hither to die, and not to purge myself, as some think peradventure, that I will. For if I should do so I were a very wretch and miser. I am by the law condemned to die, and thank my lord God that hath appointed me this death for mine offences. For since the time that I have had years of discretion I have lived a sinner, and offended my lord God, for which I ask him heartily forgiveness. And it is not unknown to many of you that I have been a great traveller in this world, and, being but of base degree, I was called to high estate, and since the time I came thereunto, I have offended my prince, for which I ask him heartily forgiveness; and I beseech you all to pray to God with me, that he will forgive me. And now I pray you that be here to bear me record, I die in the catholic faith, not doubting in any article of my faith; no, nor doubting in any sacrament of the church. Many have slandered me and reported that I have been a hearer of such as have maintained evil opinions, which is untrue. But I confess, that like as God, by his holy spirit, doth instruct us in truth—so the devil is ready to seduce us—and I have been seduced."

Thus died unwept and unpitied the man for whose punishment the people had clamoured three years before, in their struggles for freedom from his tyranny. His very daughter-in-law complains of "the extreme indigence and poverty, in which through her father-in-law's *most detestable offences*

the family was involved," and in a petition to the king speaks of his "heinous trespasses and grievous offences."* And John Gostwyke, his trusted secretary, to whom he had lent considerable sums of money, and whom he had "remembered to a monastery," writes to the king:—"may it please your most excellent majesty to be advertised that I your most humble servant John Gostwyke have in my hands, which I treasured from time to time unknown to the earl of Essex, which if I had declared unto him he would have caused me to disburse by commandment *without warrant* as *hitherto I have done,* £10,000."†

A few days before the execution, the French ambassador wrote, that "Crumwell's effects appear, by inventory, to be less valuable than was expected, though enough and too much for a man of such base origin. He had in money £7,000 sterling, which is equal to 28,000 crowns of our coinage. The silver vessels, including many crosses, chalices, mitres, vases and other spoils of the Church, might amount to rather more than that sum.‡ All these were carried in the night to the royal treasury, a sign that the king has already no intention of restoring

* Quoted Hook's "Lives," vi., 141.

† B. Mus. Cott. MS., Appendix, xxviii., fol. 125.

‡ Considering the large sums that Crumwell had spent on the purchase of real property, building &c., £7,000 in money and about the same in Church spoils is a very great amount. To this must be added the £10,000 in Gostwyke's hands making in all about £24,000 or more than a quarter of a million of our money!

them. . . . The following day many letters were found."*

"Thomas Crumwell, the cloth carder" (to give him the style ordered by Henry VIII.), was regretted by very few in England. He had plundered and murdered defenceless men and women; he had endeavoured to rob the religious of their reputations as he had of their property; he had defrauded the people of their rights, and had seized upon the patrimony of the poor; he had deprived the sick and aged of their hospitals and places of refuge; he had driven monks and nuns from their cloisters, to wander homeless in poverty and disgrace. But his day of reckoning came at last, and in merited ignominy his career closed.

* Inventaire, &c., *ut sup.*, No. 231.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHIEF ACCUSERS OF THE MONKS LAYTON, LEGH, AP RICE AND LONDON.

THE instruments selected by Crumwell to carry out his designs in regard to the monasteries were in some respects well fitted for the work. They were not troubled with scruples of conscience or unnerved by tenderness in effecting the end their master had in view. "The inquisitors," remarks Fuller, the historian, "were men who well understood the message they were sent on, and would not come back without a satisfactory answer to him who sent them, knowing themselves to be no losers thereby."* They were, and professed themselves to be, completely dependent on Crumwell. That they would not hesitate to serve him and their own interests, even at the expense of their honesty, is made clear from their own letters.

"Seldom in the world's history has a tyrant found baser instruments for his basest designs than Henry found for carrying out the visitation of the English

* "Hist.," ii., p. 214. Dean Hook adopts Fuller's estimate of these tools of Crumwell.

monasteries. That there were foolish superstitions in some of the religious houses, that there were abuses in others, that some of the thousands among the inmates of monasteries, great and small, were leading scandalous lives, and many more were living useless ones, nobody would be so silly as to deny. But that any monastery in England contained half-a-dozen such wretches as the more prominent of the visitors who came to despoil them is almost inconceivable. It is a sickening story. The reader . . is in danger of disbelieving everything that these men report in his indignation at the audacious and manifest lying which characterizes their reports."*

"It is likely," writes Mr. Froude, "that those who did undertake it (the visitation) were men who felt bitterly on the monastic vices, and did their work with little scruple or sympathy. Legh and Layton were accused subsequently of having borne themselves with overbearing insolence; they were said also to have taken bribes, and where bribes were not offered to have extorted them from the houses which they spared. That they went through their business roughly is exceedingly probable, whether needlessly so must not be concluded from the report of persons to whom their entire occupation was sacrilege. That they received money is evident from their own reports to the government, but it is evident also that they did not attempt to conceal that they received it. .

* *Athenæum*, on Mr. Gairdner's "Letters and Papers," ix., Nov. 27, 1886.

The visitors of the monasteries travelling with large retinues were expected to make their duties self-supporting, to inflict themselves as guests on the houses to which they went, and to pay their own and their servants' 'wages' from the funds of the establishments. Sums of money would be frequently offered them in lieu of a painful hospitality, and whether they took unfair advantage of their opportunities for extortion, or whether they exercised a proper moderation, cannot be concluded from the mere fact that there was a clamour against them. But beyond doubt their other proceedings were both rash and blameable. Their servants, with the hot puritan blood already in their veins . . scorning and hating the whole monastic race, had paraded their contempt before the world; they had ridden along the highways decked in the spoils of the desecrated chapels, with copes for doublets, tunics for saddle-cloths, and silver relic-cases hammered into sheaths for their daggers." *

At various times between 1535, and 1538, a considerable number of commissioners appear to have been sent to visit the monasteries, to receive their surrender, or superintend their spoliation and destruction.† The chief of the inquisitors, however, were Doctor Richard Layton, Thomas Legh, Doctor John London, and John Ap Rice. Two others, Richard

* "Hist.," iii., p. 97.

† The names of thirty-eight are given by Oldmixon. "Hist.," p. 107.

Yngworth, suffragan bishop of Dover, and William Petre were engaged principally in the subsequent work of dissolution. Upon the authority of the first four, and chiefly, if not entirely, on that of Layton, Legh and Ap Rice, rest the charges made against the monasteries. No inquiry was ever instituted (as far as can be ascertained) into the truth of their reports. They gathered them from the gossip of ill-disposed and malicious persons, and it becomes, therefore, of importance to understand who they were, that made themselves responsible for these charges. "It is not impossible," writes a modern author, "that even such bad men *may* have told the truth in this matter: but the character of witnesses must always form an important element in estimating the value of their testimony, and the character of such obscene, profligate, and perjured witnesses as Layton and London could not well be worse. These men were not 'just Lots vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked,' but 'filthy dreamers' who defiled the flesh, despised ecclesiastical dominion, and spake evil of dignities in the very spirit of the evil one."*

The more the letters and reports of the royal agents are examined, the less worthy of credit does their testimony appear. The word of men of their stamp would be accepted in no matter of serious import. However hopeless, therefore, it may be, after this lapse of time, to disprove the charges made

* Blunt, "Reform.," i., p. 359.

by them, the very fact of such testimony should be enough to discredit their accusations. "We have no reason, indeed," writes Mr. Gairdner, "to think highly of the character of Crumwell's visitors."* And it is absolutely upon the testimony of these men, unsupported by other evidence, that the monks have been condemned.

Dr. Richard Layton may be considered the most important of the four monastic inquisitors. He was without doubt the most active and zealous of the servants of Thomas Crumwell. His letters, which are the most numerous and most full of detail, abound in the most filthy accusations, general and particular. They manifest the prurient imaginations of one, who was familiar with vice in its worst forms. His letters, on the face of them, are the outpourings of a thoroughly brutal and depraved nature; even still, they actually soil the hand that touches them. He tells his stories in a way to allow of no doubt that evil has for him a zest, and that he believes his master will appreciate and approve.

The origin of this unworthy priest was humble. In one of his letters to Crumwell he says, "but for him, he would have been a basket-bearer;"† yet he obtained considerable ecclesiastical preferments. He had the sinecure rectory of Stepney, the living of St. Faith's and that of Harrow on the Hill; was prebendary of Kentish Town, dean of the collegiate

* Calendar, x., Pref. xliii.

† Cooper's "Athenæ Cantab.," i., p. 530.

church of Chester le Street, archdeacon of Buckingham and finally dean of York.

His letters to Crumwell show that a complete understanding existed between them as to the object of his mission. From the outset, when he petitioned for the employment, he professed to have a desire to serve his master's interests in every way. In return, he is constantly requesting some office or other reward, for himself or friends. In the late summer of 1535, he writes his excuses for having mistaken Crumwell's intentions. In over-readiness, being conscious of "what he could do," he commenced his first tour of inspection without the latter's full consent and approval, "and," he says in apology, "as touching my removing from the court on Tuesday, you may be assured that after I knew your will and pleasure touching the visitation of other places, I thought that you were pleased that I should then take my journey forthwith from Berkeley. And I was the better willing so to do, because my horse was all that day in an old barn without meat or litter, and I, not then assured of any lodging in all the town. . Thinking that it had been your resolute and full mind that I should then depart, and so I beseech you to take the very truth for my excuse." He then proceeds to make explanations as to the injunctions which he had given to houses already visited. These Crumwell, on the representation of some of the other zealous visitors, and as not yet cognizant of the methods of bullying and slandering which

were peculiarly Layton's own, had blamed "as very slender," and not pleasing to the king. Layton replies with all the confidence of original genius, "I dare say well that when you have known *my conceit* in the rules and injunctions premised, and what I have there done in every condition the king shall have *no less expectation* of your affairs than his grace hath had heretofore. Praying God right effectuously that rather I may be buried quick than be the occasion why the king's highness should diminish any part of the confidence or expectation of your assured and proved mind towards his grace."* But confident as he was, Layton was made to see that his power and acceptability to his employers lay in one direction only.

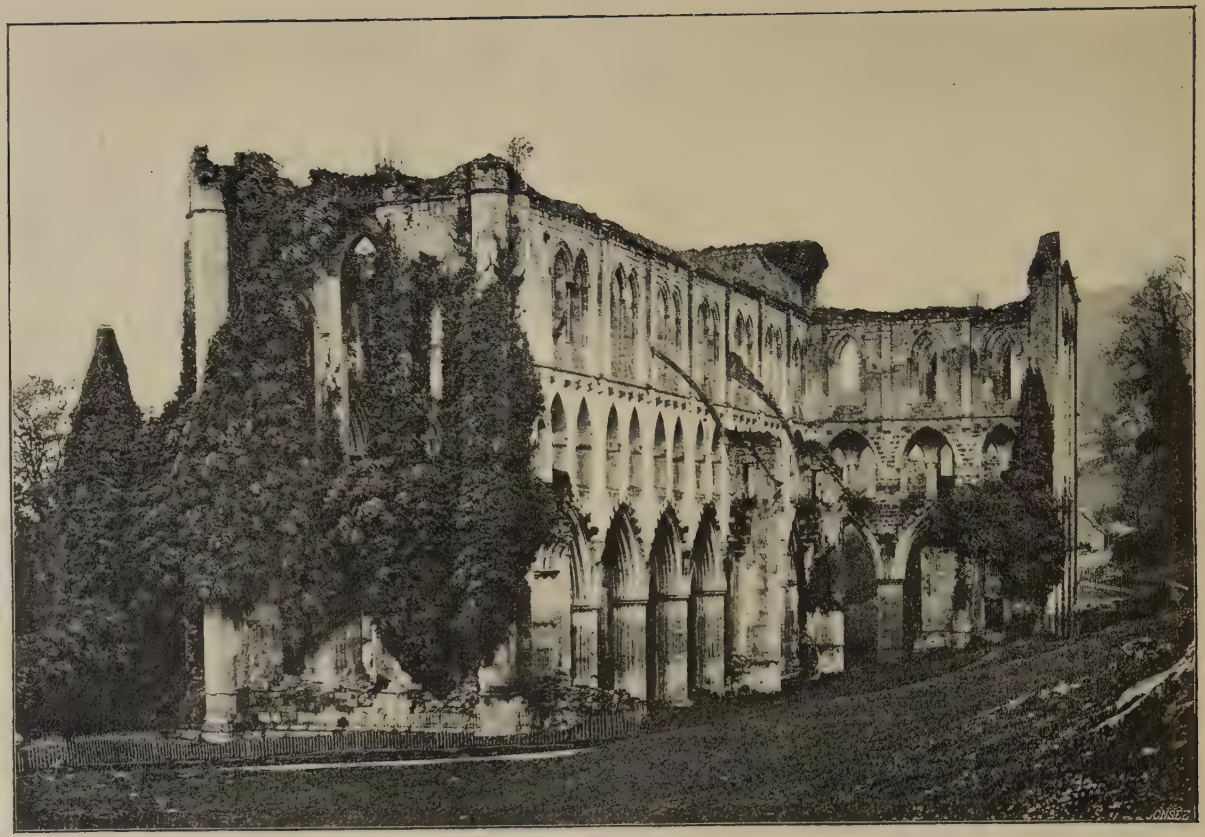
In this same visitation Layton makes another mistake in praising the great abbey of Glastonbury. For this he was taken to task by Crumwell, who evidently told him he had not been sent on his round, for the purpose of approving. He replies, "Whereas I understand by Mr. Pollard you much marvel why I would so greatly praise to the king's majesty at the time of visitation, the abbot of Glaston, who appeareth not, neither then nor now, to have known God, nor his prince, nor any part of a good Christian man's religion. So that my excessive and indiscrete praise that time unadvisedly made to my sovereign lord must needs

* Calendar, ix., No. 7. A portion of this letter has been quoted before.

now redound to my great folly and untruth, and cannot be well redubbed, but much diminish my credit towards his majesty, and even so to your lordship; whom I most humbly beseech to consider that I am a man and may err and cannot be sure of my judgment to know the inward thoughts of a monk, being fair in words and outward appearance and inwardly cankered as now by your discreet inquisition appeareth. And although they be all false, feigned, flattering hypocritical knaves, as undoubtedly there is none other of that sort. I must therefore now at this my necessity, most humbly beseech your lordship to pardon me for that my folly then committed, as you have done many times heretofore; and of your goodness to mitigate the king's highness majesty in the premisses. And from henceforth I shall be more circumspect whom I shall commend either to his grace or to your lordship."*

Layton's letters show that he was on all occasions the mere subservient tool of Henry VIII. and his more immediate master, Crumwell. As Anthony Wood puts it, "he did much to please the unlimited desires of the king." Henry and his minister had determined to make out a case against the monasteries, and Layton was just the man to assist them. He did not hesitate to promise to be a very "*alter ego*" to Crumwell, who could "trust him even as well as your ownself." Both he and Dr. Legh, he

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xx., No. 14.



St. Mary's Abbey, Rievaux: Yorkshire.

says, have to depend entirely on Crumwell as their "*Mæcenatem et unicum patronum*," and their only desire, therefore, is to declare their "true hearts and faithful mind," and the "fast and unfeigned service" they bear him.*

The fairness and honesty of his examinations may be judged by the expectations he formed and expressed beforehand of what would be the result; as when at St. Mary's, York, he "supposes to find evil disposition both in the abbot and the convent, whereof God willing I shall certify you in my next letters."† This is almost as hopelessly opposed to the first principles of justice as Crumwell's sending the abbots of Glastonbury and Reading to their "own countries to be tried and executed there."

The visitor's treatment of the prior of Lewes has already been spoken of. This is certainly a strange way to conduct a visitation, but it makes clear that Layton was only carrying out a well-defined policy.

If Layton's ingenuity, aided by promises or threats, failed (even from an "old beldame," upon whose gossipings two Gilbertine nuns are charged with grave crime) to extract any accusation against a house, the place is "confederated." In fact, the first principle with this visitor in regard to monks and nuns is, as he expresses it, that "they be all false, feigned, flattering hypocritical knaves."‡ If

* Wright, 157. Layton to Crumwell.

† Wright, 97, Layton to Crumwell. ‡ Calendar, ix., p. 157.

they are not, they must be made to appear so, and are treated as such. If they do not declare themselves to be vile they must have agreed together to conceal their evil deeds. If, as in the case of the canons of the abbey of Leicester, for instance, he can bring no definite charges, still, "to divers of them" he intends "to object" the foulest accusations, which he "has learned of other (but not of any of them)."*

Dr. Layton's money transactions with Crumwell were considerable. There is abundant evidence to prove, that he knew when to tender a bribe and when to determine a special course of action by the suggestion of its pecuniary possibilities. From a certain poor monastery he obtains a grant for his master, which not being considered large enough is returned with his "letters persuasory" for better terms. When his cousin, Christopher Joly, is in need of a place, he does not hesitate to offer a bribe of £40 to obtain the same from Crumwell.† He did what he promised to do, and kept his eyes open for his master's advantage. As Legh, his companion, writes: "Layton is now at Fountains to do your wishes."‡ In this instance these were, to get a large bribe for the appointment of a new abbot. He sent his master word that Adam Graves, the archdeacon of Exeter, was dying, and suggested he had better demand the office for a friend. On the other hand, he never neglected his own interests even in small

* *Ibid.*, p. 93. † R. O. Crum. Corr., xx., 38. ‡ *Ibid.*, xxii., 19.

points. When he was requested to resign the living of St. Faith's, he begged "if it be your lordship's pleasure, I might have the Easter book (dues) now on Easter day, which riseth the whole yearly value of my parsonage, I were much bound to your lordship."*

That he fully understood Crumwell's weakness for profitable transactions and accessibility to bribes cannot be questioned. In one of his letters, he points out that the injunctions to the bishops "shall be much profitable . . to your mastership." Shortly after, he offers in behalf of Marmaduke Bradley, a large bribe for the office of abbot of Fountains. †

Like so many others, Layton was apparently in Crumwell's hands as regards money matters. He borrowed from his master on his "bill obligatory." He is credited with heavy payments to him, and with presenting "my lord a new year's gift" of £20—a very large present from a "poor priest," as he calls himself, and worth more than £200 of our money.‡

There is something about Doctor Layton's obsequious servility to his master which is particularly repulsive. Nothing could be more exaggerated in sentiment than one expression he used, when he invited Crumwell down to his rectory at Harrow and said:—"Surely Simeon was never so glad to see Christ his master, as I shall be to see

* *Ibid.*, xx., 32. † *Ibid.*, p. 101.

‡ Chapter House Books, B. $\frac{1}{8}$.

your lordship."* At one period of his career, Layton was anxious to get the office of chancellor to the diocese of Salisbury. For this, he did not hesitate to offer Crumwell a large bribe. "For your travail therein taken," he writes, "I will give you £100."† Subsequently he was made dean of York. To judge from his letter written to Crumwell in the January of 1536, he was on the look out for the office, even on his first tour of monastic inspection and three years before he obtained the coveted post. He speaks of the dean's unwillingness to resign, for fear of his pension being cut down by some subsequent parliament. He relates the break down of an agreement as to the dean's retiring in favour of the treasurer of the diocese, and then adds:—"Wherefore I shall desire your mastership to continue your good mind towards me, and in the mean time you shall be fast assured of my faithful service in all such affairs as ye commit unto me, and for no corruption or lucre from my loyalty to swerve in doing my prince's commandment for your discharge who hath put your trust and confidence unto me."‡ When he obtained this deanery through "the good mind" of Crumwell, he showed his old partiality for ecclesiastical plate by pawning that belonging to the Minster. After his death it had to be redeemed by the chapter.§

* Quoted in "Home and Foreign Review," 1864, p. 181.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., Vol. xx., 38.

‡ Wright, p. 97.

§ B. Mus. Harl. MS., 6971. Excerpts from York Registers.

Layton does not, however, appear to have been contented with his deanery in the north, and probably desired more active employment. He wanted to come up to convocation, but writes to his master "I dare not without your leave." He concludes by reminding him that he had often said he would "get him placed beyond the seas."* Crumwell apparently kept his promise and found him occupation abroad. This appears likely, as Layton's death occurred at Brussels in 1545.

Thomas Legh, a doctor of civil law, was the companion of Doctor Layton on more than one of his visitation tours. He had been a member of King's College, Cambridge, and visited that university as Crumwell's deputy in 1535. Shortly after, whilst engaged during the autumn with Ap Rice in visiting various monasteries, the latter gives Crumwell an account of the character of the man, the king's vicar general had selected for this work. He describes him, as "a young man of intolerable elation," who went about with a retinue of twelve servants in livery. He dressed himself, John Ap Rice says, in a most costly fashion, and did not hesitate to brow-beat and illtreat the abbots and superiors he came to visit in an overbearing and insolent fashion. He had abused right roundly the abbots of Bruton and Stanley, the

"Mem. March 27, 1544. Several jewells and plate appertaining to the Church of York, pawned by Richard Layton late dean, for a certain term of years, are now, by consent of the prebends, ordered to be redeemed with money extracted out of the chest of divident."

* R. O. Crum. Cor., xx., No. 27.

prior of Bradstock and others, for not being at the doors of their monasteries to meet him, although they had received no warning of his visit, and could not possibly know what he exacted from them.

When Ap Rice, moreover, shows disinclination to be associated with him "lest he with his bold excuses, wherein he is, I advise you, very ready, would have overcome me being but of small *audacity* specially in *accusations,* for I am not *eloquent in accusations* as some men be," it is clear that even Ap Rice is unwilling at length to endorse the charges, Legh was unscrupulously ready to prefer against the monasteries, the inmates of which he treated "in his insolent and pompatique" manner. For this reason, possibly, Sir Thomas Audley, the chancellor, begs Crumwell not to allow Legh, who was commissioned to visit the religious houses of London, to make any visitation of the house of Barking. He added, however, somewhat ambiguously that his request was not made "for any suspicion I have of doctor Legh, for I hear not but that he showeth himself right indifferently in the execution of his charge."*

As to the fees and bribes Legh demanded from the monks, Ap Rice's letter, quoted above, tells us enough. "He asketh," he writes, "no less than £20 as of due for every election, which, in my opinion, is too much, and above any duty that was ever taken before." If the unfortunate victims of

* Wright, p. 74.

his tyranny did not tender him what he pleased to consider the value of his services, he refused their gift. They were then forced to send after him whatever he wished to get. "Surely," adds Ap Rice, "religious men were never so afraid of Dr. Allen as they be of him, he useth such rough fashion with them."

These fees were, no doubt, shared by Crumwell. Considerable sums of money for elections and visitations passed into the visitor general's private accounts. Sometimes, it is clear, that Dr. Legh did a good stroke of business for his master, as when he obtained from William Basing, on his election as prior of St. Swithin's, Winchester, a promise of £500 "under his writing obligatory."* The payments of this sum appear in Crumwell's account books. From the same prior of Winchester, Legh obtained for his master a patent for an annuity of £20, to be continued also to his master's son, Gregory Crumwell. Like Layton his fellow, Legh was in his master's power as a borrower of money on his bills. Considerable sums were received from him, or passed through his hands, to swell Crumwell's income.

It has already been pointed out that Ap Rice told Crumwell that he apprehended nothing less than murder,—"irrecoverable harm," as he puts it,—from Legh's familiar "rufflers and serving men" did he,

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xli., 80-81. A large sum in those days, and equal to nearly £6,000 of our money.

Legh, come to know that his conduct had been animadverted on to the minister by his fellow visitor. Yet by the reports of such a man, as described by his own companion, have the religious houses been judged. Nearly every unfavourable account given of the monasteries can be traced to the authorship of either Layton or Legh, or is a joint production of these two creatures of Crumwell.

Legh was not recalled, but, on the contrary, employed more constantly than ever in the work of visitation. A letter of admonition, however, was sent. Legh returned a penitent reply, and promised to give up his velvet gown and to discharge some of his servants.* Very possibly Crumwell recognized in Ap Rice's description of Legh's excesses and unscrupulous violence, that he was a fit instrument for his special work of driving the religious in very despair to surrender their houses and themselves, to the king's tender mercies. The explanation Legh gave of the necessity of strong coercive measures at first, in order that petitions for mitigation which would flow in might be a source † of gain to his master, would, no doubt, have great weight with Crumwell, and counterbalance the opinion of Ap Rice that it was not politic to press matters on the religious as hardly as Legh was doing. More than once, by the suggestion that it "might have lain" in Crumwell's "hands to gratify them to his no little commodity,"‡ Legh appears to

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 17.

† Calendar, ix., No. 265. ‡ Wright, 66.

have carried his point. Coupled with this hint, he prays him "heartily to consider whom" he "sends to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where either will be found all virtue and goodness, or else the fountains of all vice and mischief," according to the person sent. Further, that "if the matter be well arranged, the king's interest shall be well served and your mastership's office well discharged." Crumwell considered and sent him. Legh well understood that the art of managing his master, was by appeals to his cupidity, and by the suggestion of "advantages" which would follow on any special course of action.

The views which Dr. Legh propounded as to the utility of united action on the part of the visitors, show that he clearly understood the object of the king and Crumwell in instituting the visitation. Dr. Layton did not, in his opinion, press matters forward in the way of enforcing impossible injunctions with proper vigour and determination. Although he admitted that the regulations were in reality unworkable in practice, still he thought that the religious should be compelled to observe them, in order that they might be brought all the sooner to abandon the useless struggle.*

They have this point in common, however; it is with evident relish, that Legh relates a story adverse to the reputation of any monk or nun. It is impossible not to suspect that many of them

* *Cf.* Mr. Gairdner's Preface to Vol. ix., Letters, &c., p. xx.

come out of his own fertile imagination, without even the foundation of encouraged malicious suggestion. Of the prioress of Sopham he reports that she has bestowed a benefice on a certain friar, whom "they say she love well," and adds "to *make you laugh*" I send you a letter which is supposed to have come to her from some lady, but "as is conjectured" was sent by the friar.* He well knows what Crumwell wants. Just as Layton thought his master would look upon the tale of the abbot of Langdon as a "comedy," so Legh thinks he will not fail to enjoy his scandalous "conjecture." On the same principle, when he "does not doubt" but that his master will find "many things worthy of reformation," he adds, "by the knowledge whereof I suppose the king's highness and you will be glad." And, not the less, for this reason, that "it shall be much profitable" to you.†

Graver charges still have been made against Legh in connection with these visitations of monasteries and convents. Sanders says that "in order to discharge correctly the duties laid upon him, he tempted the religious to sin, and he was more ready to inquire into and speak about uncleanness of living, than anything else,"‡ an accusation which is somewhat borne out by the demands of the "Pilgrims of Grace," for his immediate and condign punishment.

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 13.
† Wright, p. 96.
‡ "Schism." Lewis' transl., 1877, p. 129.

In some of his letters, Legh represents the religious as anxious to quit their convents and get absolution from their vows. From Cambridge, for example, he writes* that the religious fell on their knees before him and lifting their hands begged to be released from their mode of life, and four days later from Ely, as if his powers of expression failed him, he writes again making use of almost the same words.† How utterly untrue this account of the real sentiments of the religious is, may be understood from the very small number of those returned in the reports as desirous of leaving their religious life.‡ Even Legh's own letter, written at the same time, belies his words. He suggests that by being compelled to observe impossible injunctions, the lives of the religious will become so burdensome that they shall be glad to go, and it shall seem to the world "*that at their own instant suit they are dismissed.*"§

Legh, as well as Layton, was the channel through which unworthy religious and their friends offered bribes to Crumwell for appointments to offices in religious houses. The case of Marmaduke Bradley at Fountains has been already noticed. Legh also extorts a considerable sum for his master from

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 16. Oct. 27, 1535.

† Wright, 82. Nov. 1, 1535.

‡ In the province of York and diocese of Coventry, &c., there are only 50 monks and two nuns returned as willing to go. Comperta B. M. Cleop., E. iv.

§ R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 18.

the abbot of Miravale* and the abbot of St. Albans.† At Whitby, even before they visit the abbey, they ask whether Crumwell has any friend he wishes to appoint to the office, in case the present abbot will resign "or we find any cause of deprivation."‡

So notorious did the two visitors, Legh and Layton, become throughout the country, that against them and their master, Crumwell, the anger of the insurgents in Lincolnshire and the North was chiefly directed. "The chief commissioner, Dr. Legh," writes Chapuys to the queen regent, "who was specially obnoxious to the people, as the summoner of your aunt (queen Catherine) now in glory, before the archbishop of Canterbury, contrived to escape, but his cook was taken, and as a beginning the people hanged him. A gentleman belonging to the lord privy seal, who is called master Crumwell, tried to stop them and he too was immediately laid hands on, wrapped in the hide of a newly killed calf and worried and devoured by dogs, the mob swearing they would do the same for his master."§

The Yorkshire "Pilgrims of Grace" also demanded "that Dr. Legh and Dr. Layton may have condign punishment for their extortions in time of visitation, in bribes of some religious houses £10 and £20 and other sums, besides horses, advowsons, leases under

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxix., 3.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Wright, 102. See other instances, R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 16, 19, &c.

§ Quoted by Froude, "Thomas' Pilgrim."

convent seals by them taken, and other abominable acts by them committed and done."* Mr. Froude even, admits "these two men bore themselves with overwhelming insolence, and to have taken bribes, and when bribes were not offered to have extorted them from the houses which he spared."†

Thomas Legh was made master of Sherburn hospital, in the county of Durham, in September, 1535. He took possession of his office and wrote his thanks to his master early in the following year.‡ By the statutes of this institution, the master was charged with the maintenance of thirteen poor brethren and two lepers, but Legh treated the goods of the poor as if they had been his own. "The delinquencies of former masters were but a type of his."§ He leased the property of the hospital to his own relations, and granted away the patronage of many good livings. Moreover, he contracted with those who had the property for the maintenance of only eight poor men and women. Although the leases he granted required the consent of the inmates, he sent the documents for their signatures already sealed with the common seal, and they set their names "for fear of master Legh's displeasure." During the whole of his office he never required the assent of the brethren to any of his improvident grants. Altogether in this office of trust he acted "to the utter

* Speed, p. 1022, "Exoriginale MS." † "Hist.," iii., p. 97.
‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., xxii., 19. § Surtees' "Durham," i., 140.

disinheritance, decay and destruction of the ancient and godly foundation of the same house."*

The third of the names chiefly associated with the visitation and suppression of the monasteries is that of John Ap Rice. During the autumn of 1535 he was occupied as companion to Legh, and conjointly with him brought serious accusations against many of the religious houses they visited. He had been employed as scribe in the examination of prisoners and witnesses in the Tower, and had written out the blank forms of acknowledgment of the king's supremacy, which had been sent for signature to the various religious houses. For these services he asked Crumwell to obtain him some reward, and especially "as he made a breve docket" for the king "out of all his highness' late visitation, compendiously touching the name, the order, the state,

* Depositions in 1557 before a Commission of Inquiry. Surtees' "Durham," i., 130. That Henry himself distrusted Legh seems clear from an inquiry he ordered as to the sums of money he had received at the dissolution of various religious houses. Sir John Daunce, who made the inquisition, notes:—"Memorandum as touching the plate that was supposed to be sold by the late abbot of Merivale, to George Warren, goldsmith of London, to the value of £18, whereof information was given to Dr. Legh and William Cavendish after they had dissolved the said monastery, riding by the way, the same Dr. Legh and W. Cavendish sent unto the said late abbot for the said £18. This £18 they confess that the late abbot sent to them by one of their servants by the way (begging) to be good masters unto him and his brethren. And (this) the said Cavendish doth affirm by his answer. Also by the said Doctor Legh confessing the same. Daunce"—Exch. Q. R. Miscell. Suppress. Papers $\frac{8}{2}\frac{3}{5}\frac{4}{5}$.

the number and the dates of every religious house in the realm."*

We have seen how Ap Rice reported the conduct of his companion Legh, of whom he had a wholesome dread, and how he had besought Crumwell that it might never be known from whom the accusation came. He not unnaturally supposed that his master would set some one to spy upon him, as he had been made to do on Legh; consequently he says:—"For my own dealing and behaviour I trust you shall have no cause of complaint against me. One thing humbly desiring your mastership that you give no light credence till the matter be proved and my defence heard."† That he had been previously in serious trouble is evident from the fact that he feared to report about Legh, because Crumwell might then have thought he had done so in retaliation. "Supposing that you, considering how he was one of them that depraved me heretofore with your mastership, for no just cause, but for displeasure which he have towards me for certain causes, which I will declare unto you more at leisure."‡

What the accusations were, which Legh had made against him, do not appear. They were, however, apparently of a nature discreditable enough, under ordinary circumstances, to have rendered his employment, as a visitor of monasteries, especially convents

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxxv., 39, 40. † *Ibid.*, 38.
‡ *Ibid.*

of ladies, most undesirable and unwarrantable. This may be gathered from his explaining that he could not at the time make any defence, because "I was *so abashed*, that I had not those things in my remembrance that were for my defence." Indeed, this would seem in some measure to bear out a statement made of him, that he was a priest who had been unfrocked for misconduct. He does not, moreover, appear to have received any spiritual promotions in reward for his services, like London and Layton. And it is obvious that he must have been in disgrace since he could write, "I had experience in myself not long ago how grievous yea and deadly it is for any man to have the displeasure of such a man as you are." His dependence on Crumwell was like that of the others, abject.

Like the other commissioners too, Ap Rice had considerable money transactions with the minister. He brought in a good many fees to his master's purse. Amongst the rest was a fee of £10 and a bribe of £266 13s. 4d. for the appointment of an abbot of Evesham, in succession to Clement Lichfield. This latter, as Anthony Wood says, would not surrender. He was for this abused as a "bloody abbot"* by Latimer, bishop of Worcester, and ultimately resigned, † giving place to Philip Haforde, who took the post in order to surrender it to the king. It was this latter who gave the bribe to Crumwell to secure a pension of £240 a year. Of this Philip Haforde,

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xlix. † Wright, 177.

the same bishop writes, that Crumwell "will find him a true friend."*

In return for Ap Rice's services, Crumwell appears to have desired to appoint him to some office in the cathedral church of Salisbury. Against this the dean and chapter protested in several vigorous letters,† and the appointment was not made. In his reports of the monasteries Ap Rice proves how little reliance can be placed in the truth of the charges he brings in conjunction with Legh. His manipulation of the reports on St. Edmundsbury has been already explained, and is a sample of his qualification for the work he was called on to perform.

If he could discover nothing against the good name of a monastery, it was to him a sign that the religious had agreed together to conceal their iniquities, as at St. Albans where he found nothing, "although there was much to be found."‡ It is characteristic of Ap Rice, with the other great visitors, to speak commendably of persons, who are at the same time stated to be men of dubious or evil conduct, but compliant to the will of the ruling powers. In the same letter Ap Rice told his master that he had been visiting the abbey of Walden. The abbot Robert, "a man of good learning and right sincere judgment," he said, had confessed to him "an awful secret." This was, that he had privately

* *Ibid.*, 42.

† R. O. Crum. Corr., xxxvii.

‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., xxxvii., 36. Compare the letter of Legh and Petre to Crumwell in Wright, p. 250.

married and would like to abandon the religious habit and give up his monastery "to your hands." Crumwell advised the unfortunate man to go on as he has done, to use caution and avoid scandal.* If this were really what Crumwell recommended, at a time when there were the most serious penalties against incontinence, and when many of the interrogatories were framed specially against this vice, it must have been with the idea of more deeply involving the fallen abbot in crime, and the more readily possessing himself of the monastery. It hardly seems possible, that such a secret as the abbot's marriage could have been concealed very long. The whole story looks like an invention. One thing, however, is clear, Ap Rice knew quite well what Crumwell desired, since he added: "You may have the house soon de-relinquished if you like."

Doctor London, the last of the four principal visitors and destroyers of the monasteries, is no more reliable a witness against them, than his fellows. He had considerable preferments in the Church, being canon of Windsor, dean of Osney, dean of the collegiate church of Wallingford, and, from 1526 to 1542, warden of New College, Oxford. His letters do not reveal any particular animosity against the monks. His zeal in Crumwell's service was principally displayed in collecting for him the plate and jewels of the monastic churches, and in defacing those sacred buildings. In none of his many letters

* *Ibid.*, xlv., 10.

does he endorse distinctly any charge made by the other visitors, or suggest any but vague accusations on his own authority. He reports generally, that he finds many of the monks and canons "young lusty men always fat fed," by no means "learned nor apt to the same," and he says he has advised them "to turn some of their ceremonies of idleness into some bodily exercise, and not sit all day lurking in the cloister idly."* But beyond these general accusations, although evidently not biassed in favour of the religious, he does not appear to have gone.

In fact, there is some reason to believe, that Dr. London was induced to throw himself into the schemes of Crumwell and Henry, by motives rather of self-interest than conviction. He had most certainly been amongst those who considered the break with Rome a mere temporary phase of the quarrel about the king's divorce. He had even gone out of his way to prevent his nephew committing himself to any violent language or action against the pope. It is, moreover, quite possible that the doctor's interference upon this occasion, brought, as it certainly was, to the notice of Crumwell by the examination and confession of the nephew, may have been the means of placing him in the minister's power. It may have been this circumstance, which afforded Crumwell a subservient tool to use in the furtherance of his suppression schemes. The circumstances as they appear in the "confes-

* Wright, p. 215.

sion of Edward, nephew to Dr. London," are these. This young man considered that the pope's supremacy was not to be maintained. For some reason or other his papers were seized and delivered to his uncle. London sent for him early one morning and talked to him in his garden about his views. "Edward," he said, "you be my nephew. I have now sent for you only to give you counsel, that if God had endued you with grace you may return to grace again." He then charged him with writing against the bishop of Rome, and got the bishop of Winchester to try and argue him from his position. The latter, according to the confession, urged "that their ancestors could not have erred so many hundred years, and that this world could not continue long," that though the king "has now conceived a little malice against the bishop of Rome because he would not agree unto his marriage," this would never last, and "I trust," he continued, "the king will wear harness on his own back to fight against such heretics as thou art."* Dr. London was thus clearly implicated by his nephew's confession, in an opposition to the king's attitude of hostility to the pope, and was thus completely in the power of Crumwell.

* Calendar, viii., No. 146. The "confession" was made apparently about 1534, just after the final rupture with the pope, and we know that Bishop Gardiner, of Winchester, was in the April of this year in great danger of being sent to the Tower (Cal. vii., No. 522). A like danger would probably have threatened London.

In the work of devastation, London was certainly the most terrible of all the monastic spoilers. He writes, for instance, that he has pulled down the silver image of our lady of Caversham and will send it by the next barge from Reading. He has defaced the chapel, and thinks the lead had better be pulled off the roof. The lodgings of the priest from Noteley abbey, who served this place of pilgrimage, "with its large garden and orchard," he has kept, because, as he tells Crumwell, "it will do well for any friend of yours."* At the friar's houses in Reading† the people somewhat anticipated his work of destruction, much to his disgust, helping themselves "to the very clappers of the bells." However, he did not stay his hand on this account, but a few weeks later informs his master, "I did only deface the church (at Reading) all the windows being full of friars, and left the roof and walls whole for the king's use. I sold the ornaments and the cells in their dorter."‡ At the Grey Friars, in the same town, he did much the same barbarous work of destruction. "The inward part of the church," he writes, "thoroughly decked with Grey Friars, as well in the windows as otherwise, I have defaced."§ In fact, the record of his work, as contained in his letters, tells everywhere the same tale of wholesale destruction. In this he had, as he informs Crumwell, the object of preventing the friars again taking possession of their property. From

* Wright, p. 222.
† *Ibid.*
‡ R. O. Crum. Corr., xxiii., No. 80.
§ *Ibid.*, No. 94.

Coventry he writes that he has partly destroyed the house of the Grey Friars "because the poor people lay so sore uppon it." At Warwick he had defaced the windows of the friars' church, and as usual pulled down so much of the house as to prevent its being used again.*

Like the other visitors, London listened to the tales of neighbours, who in many instances were probably only too anxious to gain Crumwell's favour by spreading reports adverse to the victims of his policy of destruction. Thus some tale-bearer informed the visitor, that the abbot of Combe had hidden £500 in a feather bed in his brother's house. He proceeded forthwith to the place and searched all the beds for the money. Not finding what he had expected, he examined the abbot himself, who "without any difficulty confessed" what money was there, and it was only £25.†

Sometimes even this iconoclast appears to pause in his work of pulling down, and to regret the havoc he is causing. "At Stamford," he says, "I have left as yet visibly at the Grey Friars a goodly image of copper gilt, and the said (image) laid upon marble made for dame Blanche of Lancaster. It is very beautiful, and I resolved to know of the king's grace concerning it."‡ The monument, which the aged countess of Salisbury, cardinal Pole's mother, had prepared for herself in the priory of Christchurch, Twynham,

* *Ibid.*, No. 81. † *Ibid.*, No. 79.

‡ R. O. Chapter House Books, A. $\frac{4}{30}$, fol. 64.

did not meet with the same sparing hand on his visit there. "In this church," he writes, "we found a chapel and monument curiously made of Caen stone, prepared by the late mother of Reginald Pole for her burial, which we have caused to be defaced and all the arms and badges clearly to be deleted."*

From the same church, which he found "well furnished with jewels and plate," he selected some he considered "meet for the king's majesty's use." These were "a little chalice of gold, a goodly large cross double gilt with the foot garnished with stones and pearls, two goodly basons gilt having the king's arms well enameled, a goodly great pix for the sacrament double gilt. There be also other things of silver, right honest and of good value, as well for the church use as for the table, reserved and kept to the king's use." In the same way he selected from the sacrist's treasures of the great cathedral church of Coventry, fourteen copes of tissue and two of old work, for the king's use.

Whilst engaged in this mission London did not neglect his master's interests. From the abbot and monks of Reading, he obtains a grant under their convent seal for Crumwell, and sends him the "parchment" security.† At the new year, sending his blessings and a "poor token," he writes that the monastery of Thelisford, out of which he "has dispatched the brethren, will do well for his master's friend Mr. Lucye," as "he keepeth a right good

* Wright, p. 232. † *Ibid.*, p. 224.

house and has many children and bringeth them up in learning and virtue. He hath also a great many brothers and sisters upon his hands."*

Dr. London's treatment of the abbess of Godstow is well known. He had been opposed to her appointment, and had "ever since," as she writes to Crumwell, "borne me great malice and grudge, like my mortal enemy." To him was committed the task of suppression. As Katherine Bulkeley, the abbess, reports, he "suddenly came unto me with a great rout with him, and here doth threaten me and my sisters, saying he hath the king's commission to suppress the house spite of my teeth. And when he saw that I was content that he should do all things according to his commission, and showed him plain that I would never surrender to his hands, being my ancient enemy, now he begins to entreat me, and to inveigle my sisters one by one, otherwise than ever I heard tell of the king's subjects hath been handled, and here tarrieth and continueth to my great costs and charge. . And notwithstanding that Doctor London, like an untrue man, hath informed your lordship that I am a spoiler and a waster . . the contrary is true, for I have not alienated one halporth of the goods of this monastery, moveable or unmoveable, but have rather encreased the same."†

Crumwell, for some reason or other, ordered Doctor London not to proceed any further in the matter. The abbess writes her thanks, "that it hath

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xxiii., 96. † Wright, p. 230.

pleased you to direct your letters for the stay of doctor London, who was here ready to suppress this poor house against my will and all my sisters, and had done it, indeed, if you had not sent so speedily contrary commandments."* At the same time Crumwell had demanded some office at Godstow for one Dr. Owen. The abbess assured him that it should be granted as he wished. "I have seen complaints of Dr. London's soliciting nuns," writes bishop Burnet, "yet I do not find Doctor Lee complained of." London's subsequent history makes it seem not at all unlikely that he would have availed himself of exceptional opportunities for entrapping the nuns in so diabolical a manner. Archdeacon South, writing about other matters than his connection with this visitation, gives this character to him: "But to what open shame Doctor London was afterwards put, with open penance, with two smocks on his shoulders, for Mrs. Thykked and Mrs Jennynges, the mother and the daughter, and how he was taken with one of them by Henry Plankney in his gallery, being his sister's son—as it was then known to a number in Oxford and elsewhere, so I think that some yet living hath it in remembrance, as well as the penner of this history."†

By this, Dr. London nearly lost the favour of Crumwell and his office as warden of new college, Oxford. Thomas Bedyll writes to Crumwell that "Master

* R. O. Crum. Corr., xiv., 3.

† "Narratives of Reformation," Camd. Soc., p. 35.

London, warden of the new college in Oxford is informed (I wot not by whom) that your lordship is sore amoved from him in the benevolence and favour, which your lordship bore him and you intend to put him forth of his college." I would beg you to remember, he adds, that he "hath done more good to the reformation of ignorance and superstition than all the other visitors." He retained his office at this time, but only to be involved in deeper disgrace after Crumwell's execution.

Whilst London was warden of New College the antiquary, Leland, applied to him for some information as to William of Wykeham. At his dictation was written some memoranda, giving a discreditable and wholly false account of that prelate. This was not only devoid of foundation, but must have been known to be so. An act of baseness and ingratitude on London's part, as he had not only been warden of Wykeham's college in Oxford, but, as bishop Lowth * remarks, "he owes his subsistence to Wykeham's bounty," having been educated at his school in Winchester.† "His history," the bishop considers, "is sufficient to show his want of credit."‡

After Crumwell's fall, London paid his court to

* "Life of William of Wykeham," 3rd ed., p. 288. The paper referred to is now in the Bodleian, and consists of 13 notes written on the cover of an old letter.

† London was admitted to New College 1505, took his LL.B. 1512, and LL.D. 1518. He was canon of York and Lincoln, and domestic chaplain to archbishop Warham.

‡ "Life of Wykeham," p. 289.

Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and insinuated himself into his good graces as dexterously as he had before done, on Warham's death, into those of Crumwell. By this prelate he was used as an instrument to endeavour to ruin Cranmer, and to chastise the would-be reformers with the "whip of the six strings." Between Cranmer and doctor London there was no love lost, and the archbishop calls him "a stout and filthy prebendary of Windsor."*

At this period of his life he is described as being rough and brutal in his determination to punish those who rejected the six articles. At Oxford "he was one of the three that prosecuted most rigorously the good students in the Cardinal's college, when by imprisonment and hard usage several of them died."† One of these students describes his demeanour when he learnt the escape from Oxford of the chief light among the opponents of the articles. It was at Vespers in St. Friswide's that the news was brought to the dean and commissary, who, as the Magnificat was being sung, left the choir. And "about the middle of the church met them, doctor London, puffing blustering and blowing like a hungry and greedy lion seeking his prey." At a subsequent examination, the narrator says, "doctor London and the dean threatened me, that if I would not tell the

* Extract from MS. Benet. Coll. Camb., "*accusatio Cranmeri.*" Mem. in the archbishop's own hand, quoted in Strype. "Mems. of Cranmer," i., p. 158.

† Strype, *Ibid.*, p. 156.

truth . . I should surely be sent into the Tower of London and there be racked and put into *little-ease.*"*

What Dr. London was at this time, he no doubt was a year or two before as visitor of monasteries and convents of nuns. One can well imagine the indignation of the abbess of Godstow at the unmannerly conduct of this strange kind of visitor, and one shudders to picture the lot of helpless ladies in the convents of England exposed to the rude questionings and intemperate threats of this immoral and unscrupulous man.

By means of informations and evidence collected by London and presented to the council by bishop Gardiner, several people suffered death under the "six articles." "He and one Symons a lawyer, and Ockham, that set traps for others," says Strype, "were catched at length themselves. They were men that busied themselves in framing indictments upon the six articles against great numbers of those that favoured or professed the Gospel, and in sending them to court to Winchester, who was to prefer the complaints to the council. The king being more and more informed of their base conspiracy, and disliking their bloody dispositions, commanded that the council should search into the matter, and so London, &c., being examined before the council, were in the end found to be perjured in denying upon their oaths

* Anthony Delaber's account of Thomas Garret, printed in Foxe's Acts., v., p. 421.

what they had indeed done, and was proved manifestly to their faces. Hereupon they were adjudged perjured persons, and appointed to ride through Windsor, Reading and Newbury,"* their faces to the tails of their horses, and to stand in the pillory in each of these towns on a market day, with a paper on their heads proclaiming their offence. This done, they were committed to the Fleet prison, where London died miserably in 1543. Strangely enough it was Thomas Legh, another visitor, who was the chief instrument in proving London's guilt and obtaining his punishment.

"Such again,"† writes Mr. Blunt, "a dean twice detected in immorality and put to open penance for it, and afterwards convicted of perjury, is not the stuff of which credible witnesses are made."

Probably, however, the fact that the avowed object of the visitors was plunder, and that the charges made against the religious were only means to attain that end, will be to most minds the most conclusive evidence of the untrustworthiness of their testimony. Whatever there is to be said of the monasteries, it is unjust to convict them of shameless irregularities on the word of those who had a motive in endeavouring to blacken their good name. The words of Edmund Burke may here once more be recorded. "It is not with much credulity," he writes, "that I listen to any when they speak ill

* "Mems. of Cranmer," i., p. 175.

† "Reformation," i., p. 358.

of those whom they are going to plunder. I rather suspect that vices are feigned or exaggerated when profit is looked for in the punishment. An enemy is a bad witness—a robber is a worse."*

The character of the men upon whose word the monasteries have been defamed would in these days be defended by no honest historian. No other evidence is forthcoming, and it may be fairly asked, in the name of common sense no less than of sacred justice, that the religious houses may not be condemned on the unsupported word of such miserable men as Layton, Legh, Ap Rice and London. The ground thus cleared, the history of the suppression will be narrated in the second volume of this work.

* "Reflections on the French Revolution."

APPENDIX.

Index to the Map of the Houses of Carthusians and the "Four Orders of Friars" at the time of the Suppression.

In the following list it has been thought convenient to include all the houses of the "four orders of friars" mentioned by Tanner and the "Monasticon," although several are not given in the map; the reasons for exclusion are briefly stated. For accurate information as to the state of the Dominican province at the time of the suppression, thanks are due to the Rev. C. R. F. Palmer, O.P. Father Palmer adds on the subject of the frequent confusion between the various orders of friars which now and then causes some difficulty in identifying the orders in the pages of Leland and elsewhere:—"The Augustine friars were sometimes called *Black friars*, from the colour of their habit. In the royal grants of ecclesiastical property under Henry VIII. there was a great deal of confusion as to friars, and the lawyers did not well distinguish between black, white, and grey. In the patent and close rolls and royal wardrobe accounts Newport and Kingston-on-Hull are always set down as Augustinians till the dissolution."

ALLERTON, North	Aust.	Project to found, 14 Ed. III. (Tanner), did not take effect.
,,	Carm.	D b.
ALNWICK (see Holme).		
ANNE, ST. (see Coventry).		
APPLEBY	Carm.	C b.
ARUNDEL	Dom.	E f.
ASHEN	Aust.	This is the Austin house at Clare.
ATHERSTONE	Aust.	D d.
AYLESBURY	Franc.	D e.

AYLESFORD	Carm.	E e.	
BABWELL (see Bury).			
BAMBURGH	Dom.	D a.	
BANGOR	Dom.	B c.	
,,	Carm.		A mistake of Leland's for Blackfriars.
BARNARD CASTLE	Aust.		Leave to build, 1381; the proposed foundation never took effect.
BARNSTAPLE	Aust.		Not continued; see Oliver, *Mon. d. Exon.* 197.
BEAUMARIS (see Llanvais)			Beaumari Franciscans is a mistake of Speed's.
BEAUVALE	Carth.	D c.	
BEDFORD	Franc.	E d.	
BEVERLEY	Franc.	E b.	
,,	Dom.	E b.	
BLAKEMORE FOREST (Dorset)	Aust.		If it ever existed as an Austin friary, deserted before H. VIII.
BLAKENEY (or **Snitterley**)	Carm.	F c.	
BLIBURGH	Dom.		The Dominicans of Dunwich had license, 1384, to remove their house to Bliburgh; the removal was never effected (C.R.F.P.).
BODMIN	Franc.	A f.	
BOLTON (**Yorks**)	Carm.		Mentioned Pat. 9 Ed. III. (Tanner); at the least, not continued.
BOSTON	Dom.	E c.	
,,	Franc.	E c.	
,,	Carm.	E c.	
,,	Aust.	E c.	
BRECKNOCK	Dom.	B d.	
BRIDGENORTH	Franc.	C d.	
BRIDGWATER	Franc.	C e.	
BRISOLL (**Derbyshire**; or **Bredesall Park**)	Aust.		Austin *Canon*, temp H. VIII.
BRISTOL	Dom.	C e.	
,,	Franc.	C e.	
,,	Carm.	C e.	
,,	Aust.	C e.	
BRUSYARD	Franc. Nuns	F d.	
BURNHAM NORTON	Carm.	F c.	
BURY ST. EDMUNDS	Franc.	F d.	
CAMBRIDGE	Dom.	E d.	

CAMBRIDGE	Franc.	E d.	
,,	Carm.	E d.	
,,	Aust.	E d.	
CANTERBURY	Dom.	F e.	
,,	Franc.	F e.	
,,	Aust.	F e.	
CARDIFF	Dom.	C d.	
,,	Franc.	C d.	
,,	Carm.		Probably destroyed in the fifteenth cent. (Mon. VI., 1582).
CARLISLE	Dom.	C a.	
,,	Franc.	C a.	
CARMARTHEN	Franc.	B d.	
CHELMSFORD	Dom.	E e.	
CHESTER	Dom.	C c.	
,,	Franc.	C c.	
,,	Carm.	C c.	
CHICHESTER	Dom.	D f.	
,,	Franc.	D f.	
CLARE	Aust.	E d.	
CLEOBURY MORTIMER (see Woodhouse).			
COLCHESTER	Franc.	F d.	
COVENTRY: St. Anne's	Carth.	D d.	
,,	Franc.	D d.	
,,	Carm.	D d.	
DARTFORD	Dominican Nuns	E e.	
DENBIGH	Carm.	B c.	
DENNY	Franc. Nuns.	E d.	
DERBY	Dom.	D c.	
DONCASTER	Dom.		"The Dominicans never had a house at Doncaster" (C.R.F.P.).
,,	Franc.	D c.	
,,	Carm.	D c.	
DORCHESTER (Dorset)	Franc.	C f.	
DRAYTON-IN-HALES (Salop)	Carm.		License to found, c. 1354 (Tanner). The project did not take effect.
DROITWICH	Aust.	C d.	
DUNSTABLE	Dom.	E e.	
DUNWICH	Dom.	F d.	
,,	Franc.	F d.	

EPWORTH	Carth.		D c.
EXETER	Dom.		B f.
„	Franc.		B f.
FISHERTON (Dominicans; see Salisbury).			
GLOUCESTER	Dom.		C e.
„	Franc.		C e.
„	Carm.		C e.
GORLESTON	Aust.		F d.
GRANTHAM	Franc.		E c.
GREENWICH	Franc.		E e.
GRIMSBY	Franc.		E c.
„	Aust.		E. c.
GUILDFORD	Dom.		E c.
HARTLEPOOL	Franc.		D b.
HAVERFORD-WEST	Dom.		A e.
HEREFORD	Dom.		C d.
„	Franc.		C d.
HINTON	Carth.		C e.
HITCHIN	Carm.		E d.
HOLNE (Alnwick)	Carm.		D a.
HULL	Carth.		E c.
„	Dom.	A mistake for Austin friars.	
„	Carm.		E c.
„	Aust.		E c.
HUNTINGDON	Aust.		E d.
ILCHESTER	Dom.		C e.
IPSWICH	Dom.		F d.
„	Carm.		F d.
„	Franc.		F d.
„	Aust.	A mistake of Speed's.	
LANCASTER	Dom.		C b.
„	Franc.	Though mentioned in Franciscan Lists of the 14th century (*Cf.* Brewer, *Mon. Fr.*, App. viii.), there seems to have been no other convent at Lancaster temp. Hen. VIII. than that of the Dominicans (*Cf. Test. Ebor.* v., 130, a will of 1521: "I bequethe to the four orders of Freres, &c. . . . Freres of Lancastre and Hartillpole to be *two* of them").	
LANGLEY, KINGS (Herts)	Dom.		E e.
LANGLEY (Surrey; see Guildford)			
LAUNCESTON	"a friery."	A mistake of Carew's.	

LEICESTER	Dom.	D d.
,,	Franc.	D d.
,,	Aust.	D d.
LENTON	Carm.	Mentioned Pat. 2 Ed. III. (Tanner). Not continued.
LEWES	Franc.	E f.
LICHFIELD	Franc.	D d.
LINCOLN	Dom.	E c.
,,	Franc.	E c.
,,	Carm.	E c.
,,	Aust.	E c.
LLANVAIS (near Beaumaris)	Franc.	B c.
LONDON	Carth.	E e.
,,	Dom.	E e.
,,	Franc.	E e.
,,	Franc. Nuns	E e.
,,	Carm.	E e.
,,	Aust.	E e.
LOSENHAM (in Nowenden parish, Kent)	Carm.	F e.
LUDLOW	Carm.	C d.
,,	Aust.	C d.
LYME REGIS	Carm.	Project, 12 Ed. II., never brought to effect (Hutchins, 1st ed., i., 253.
LYNN	Dom.	E d.
,,	Franc.	E d.
,,	Carm.	E d.
,,	Aust.	E d.
MAIDSTONE	Franc.	Not continued; see Hasted, iv., 315 (8vo. ed.).
MALDON (Essex)	Carm.	F e.
MARLBOROUGH	Carm.	D e.
MELCOMBE (or Milton, near Weymouth)	Dom.	C f.
MOUNTGRACE	Carth.	D b.
NEWARK	Franc.	D c.
,,	Aust.	D c.
NEWBRIDGE (Norfolk)	Aust.	A hermitage or lazar house, not a friary.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE	Dom.	D a.
,,	Franc.	D a.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE	Carm.	D a.
,,	Aust.	D a.
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	Dom.	C c.
NEWPORT (Mon.)	Aust.	C e. Newport was Augustinian, not Dominican (C.R.F.P.).
NEWPORT (Pemb.)	Aust.	See *Mon.*, vi., 1603, and Tanner. This is no more than a confusion with the house of Austin friars at Newport, Mon.
NORTHAMPTON	Dom.	D d.
,,	Franc.	D d.
,,	Carm.	D d.
,,	Aust.	D d.
NORWICH	Dom.	F d.
,,	Franc.	F d.
,,	Carm.	F d.
,,	Aust.	F d.
NOTTINGHAM	Franc.	D c.
,,	Carm.	D c.
ORFORD	Aust.	F d.
OXFORD	Dom.	D e.
,,	Franc.	D e.
,,	Carm.	D e.
,,	Aust.	D e.
PENRITH	Austin.	C b.
PLYMOUTH	Franc.	B f.
,,	Carm.	B f.
PONTEFRACT	Dom.	D c.
,,	Franc.	Doubtful.
,,	Carm.	,,
POOLE	"a friary"	No friary; the grant, 3 Ed. VI., seems to have been of gild property.
PRESTON (Lancashire)	Franc.	C b.
READING	Franc.	D e.
RHUDDLAN	Dom.	B c.
RICHMOND (Surrey)	Franc.	E e.
RICHMOND (Yorks)	Franc.	D b.
,,	Carm.	A mistake in the record.
RUTHIN	Carm.	If the house ever existed (Lel. *Itin.*, iii., 118; v., 42, ed. 1745) it did not continue to H. VIII.

RYE	Aust.	F e.
SALISBURY (Fisherton)	Dom.	D e.
SALISBURY	Franc.	D e.
SANDWICH	Carm.	F e.
SCARBOROUGH	Dom.	E b.
,,	Franc.	E b.
,,	Aust.	E b.
SELE (Sussex)	Carm.	The priory of Sele was granted to the Carmelites of New Shoreham, who migrated thither. Sele was afterwards given to Magd. Coll., Oxford, and the Carmelites returned to New Shoreham.
SELWOOD (see Witham)		
SHEEN	Carth.	E e.
,,	Carm.	Mentioned Pat., 9 and 11 Ed. II. (Tanner). Did not continue.
SHERBORNE (Dorset)	Aust.	Mentioned Pat., 9 Ed. III. (Tanner). Not continued.
SHOREHAM, NEW	Carm.	E f.
SHREWSBURY	Dom.	C d.
,,	Franc.	C d.
,,	Carm.	A mistake of Speed's.
,,	Aust.	C d.
SNITTERLEY (see Blakeney).		
SOUTHAMPTON	Franc.	D f.
STAFFORD	Franc.	C d.
,,	Aust.	C d.
STAMFORD	Dom.	E d.
,,	Franc.	E d.
,,	Carm.	E d.
,,	Aust.	E d.
SUDBURY	Dom.	F d.
SUTTON-IN-HOLDERNESS	Carm.	Ment. Pat., 34 Ed. I. (Tanner). Did not continue.
TAUNTON	Carm.	Ment. Pat., 15 Ed. III. (Tanner); Toulmin (*Hist. of Taunton*) thinks it may have been dissolved before H. VIII.
TAVISTOCK	Aust.	Mentioned Pat., 8 R. II. (Tanner).
THETFORD	Dom.	F d.
,,	Aust.	F d.
TICKHILL	Aust.	D c.
TRURO	Dom.	A f.
WALSINGHAM	Aust.	F c.

WARE	Franc.	E e.
WARRINGTON	Aust.	C c.
WARWICK	Dom.	D d.
,,	Carm.	Seems to be only an error of Le Neve s.
WATERBEACH	Franc. Nuns.	E d.
WEYMOUTH (see Melcombe).		
WILTON (Wilts)	Dom.	D e.
WINCHELSEA	Dom.	F e.
,,	Franc.	F e.
WINCHESTER	Dom.	D e.
,,	Franc.	D e.
,,	Carm.	D e.
,,	Aust.	D e.
WITHAM	Carth.	C e.
WOODHOUSE (near Cleobury Mortimer)	Aust.	C d.
WORCESTER	Dom.	C d.
,,	Franc.	C d.
YARMOUTH	Dom.	F d.
,,	Franc.	F d.
,,	Carm.	F d.
YARMOUTH, LITTLE (Aust.; see Gorleston).		
YARM	Dom.	D b.
YORK	Dom.	D b.
,,	Franc.	D b.
,,	Carm.	D b.
,,	Aust.	D b.

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Marton
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Bridlington
Tockwith
Helagh-park
Warter
Cokersand
Gisburn
Haltem Price
Ferreby North
Drax
Widkirk
Nostell
Hyrst
Ailesham
Thornton
Newhouse
Thorneham
Wellow
Hagneby
Burscough
Norton
Beauchief
Worksop
Welbeck
Torkesey
Markby
Barlings
Tupholme
Dale
Newstead
Felley
Thurgarton
Nocton
Kyme
Bethgelert
Trentham
Calwich
Darley
Neubo
Rocester
Stone
Repton
Shelford
Croxton
Stafford
Greisley
Ronton
Kirkby Belley
Bourn
Lilleshull
Bredon
Ilvescroft
Leicester
Brooke
Wombridge
Chirbury
Haghmorn
Osulvestfon
Launde
Finnesfred
Maxstoke
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West Dereham
Buckenham
Langley
Bromehill
Thetford
Ixworth
Bliburgh
Leystone
Letheringham
Butley
Ipswich
Woodbridge
Dodnash
Dunstable
Tiptree
Colchester St Botolph
St Osith
A
B
C
D
E
F
a
b
c
d
e
f

— Dioceses.
..... Counties
1 Dominican Friars
1a Dominican Nuns.
2 Franciscan Friars
2a Franciscan Nuns.
3 Carmelite Friars.
4 Augustinian Friars
5 Carthusians.
The Carthusians and four orders of Friars at the time of the suppression.
Bamburgh
Holne
Newcastle
Carlisle
Hartlepool
Penrith
Appleby
Yarm
Richmond
North Allerton
Mount Grace
Scarborough
Lancaster
York
Preston
Warrington
Beverley
Hull
Pontefract
Epworth
Grimsby
Doncaster
Tickhill
Lincoln
Llamvais
Bangor
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Orford
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Brecknock
Hitchin
Dunstable
Colchester
Carmarthen
Gloucester
Aylesbury
Ware
Haverfordwest
Oxford
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Chelmsford
Maldon
Newport
London
Cardiff
Marlborough
Reading
Sheen
Greenwich
Richmond
Dartford
Bristol
Hinton
Aylesford
Canterbury
Sandwich
Witham
Guildford
Wilton
Salisbury
Bridgewater
Winchester
Losenham
Ilchester
Southampton
Rye
Chichester
Arundel
Lewes
Winchelsea
New Shoreham
Exeter
Dorchester
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